HEY, KIDS! COMICS! page 6

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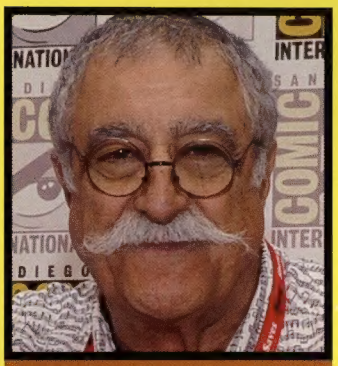

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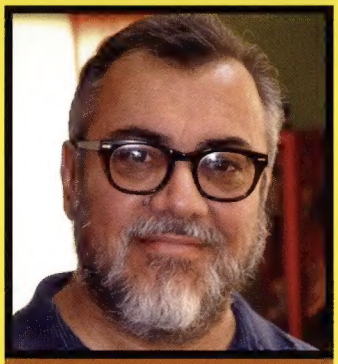

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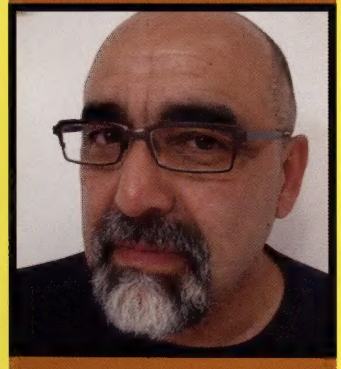

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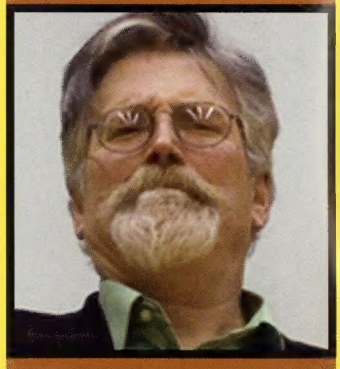

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S775M2	7¾ × 10½˝	Silver/Gold Comic: 1950s–'60s	10.40	16.50	28.00	76.50	121.00	230.60
S800M2	8 × 10½˝	Golden Age Comic: 1940s–'50s	10.80	17.25	29.70	80.55	128.00	243.75
S825M2	8¼ × 10½˝	Super Golden Age Comic	11.10	17.85	30.60	82.80	131.50	250.00
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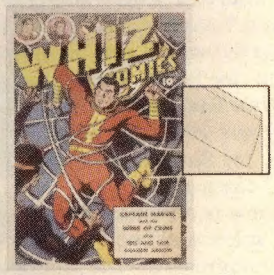
S750ROF	7⅜ × 10½˝	Standard Comic: 1970s–'90s	15.30	21.40	38.25	91.80	173.40	331.50
S775ROF	7⅝ × 10½˝	Dell/Silver Comic: 1950s–'60s	16.50	21.95	39.75	95.00	182.00	346.80
S825ROF	8¼ × 10½˝	Golden Age Comic: 1940s–'50s	18.25	24.75	44.90	107.00	191.25	350.00
S875ROF	8⅞ × 11⅝˝	Large Comic	19.50	25.50	46.95	112.20	213.00	400.00



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S750RBF	7⅜ × 10¾˝	Standard Comic: 1970s–'90s	37.50	50.00	92.50	220.00	420.00	800.00
S775RBF	7⅝ × 10¾˝	Dell/Silver Comic: 1950s–'60s	40.00	52.50	100.00	231.25	445.00	850.00
S825RBF	8¼ × 10¾˝	Golden Age Comic: 1940s–'50s	41.25	55.00	105.00	237.00	455.00	867.00
S875RBF	8⅞ × 11⅞˝	Large Comic	42.50	57.50	110.00	250.00	475.00	900.00

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ATAFMC814	8½ × 14˝	.0025˝	Treasury Comics	$22.50	30.00	45.00	93.75	165.00	300.00
ATAFMC1117	11 × 17˝	.004˝	Original Art	31.25	42.50	68.00	142.50	247.50	450.00

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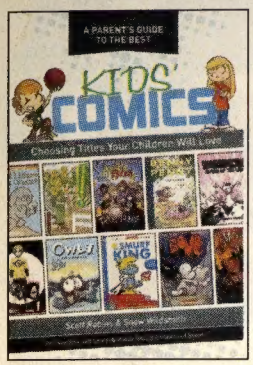
FROM THE EDITOR



We love experts. As Maggie often says, "An expert is the person who knows where to look for the information." We used that approach when we began work on ***A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics***. While we are experts on comics history (and know where to look up information to double-check our own memories) and creators (ditto), we knew *we* weren't the individuals most qualified to come up with a basic guidebook to the excellent kids' graphic novels available these days.

Fortunately, a pair of experts — Scott Robins and Snow Wildsmith — were available.

Scott is a librarian at the Toronto Public Library and contributes to Salem Press' *Critical Survey of Graphic Novels: Heroes & Superheroes*. He writes a blog for *Good Comics for Kids* via *School Library Journal.com* and is the children's programming director for the annual Toronto Comic Arts Festival (TCAF). He served on the graphic-novel selection committee for the Canadian Children's Book Centre's Best Books for Kids and Teens in 2010 and 2011 and was a jury member of the 2011 Joe Shuster Awards in the "Comics for Kids" category.

Snow is a former librarian now working as a writer and book reviewer and has served on committees for the American Library Association and Young Adult Library Services Association. She reviews graphic novels for *Booklist, ICv2.com, School Library Journal*'s comic-book-review blog *Good Comics for Kids, Unshelved's Book Club*, and Robin Brenner's *No Flying No Tights* review website. She also writes booktalks and creates recommended reading lists for Ebsco's *NoveList* database.

So "experts seeking experts" netted us a pair of experts who were a delight to work with. Check out our new book. We think you'll agree!

— Brent Frankenhoff
brent.frankenhoff@fwmedia.com

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CBG #1691 July 2012
Cover photo by Kris Kandler

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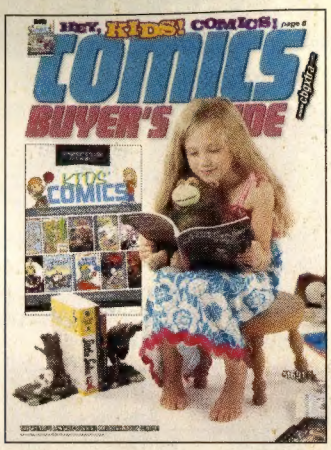

Briar Williams, the daughter of former ***CBG*** graphic designer and comics writer and artist Shawn Williams, is our cover model, reading a graphic novel to her favorite stuffed friend.

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Grownups' Guide to Kids' Comics

by **BRENT FRANKENHOFF**

A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics: Choosing Titles Your Children Will Love

By Scott Robins and Snow Wildsmith
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ISBN-13: 978-1-4402-2994-7
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CBG's latest project, *A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics*, came out of a brainstorming session. We are often asked these days what's out there for children who would like to start reading comics. Even people who have been reading comics since their own childhood may not be aware of the incredible variety of comics available to today's young readers. We discussed the fact that, while there have been a few books that have showcased and reviewed graphic novels, we had not seen a full-color, illustrated volume specifically aimed at parents, teachers, librarians, and educators who were looking for comics for kids.

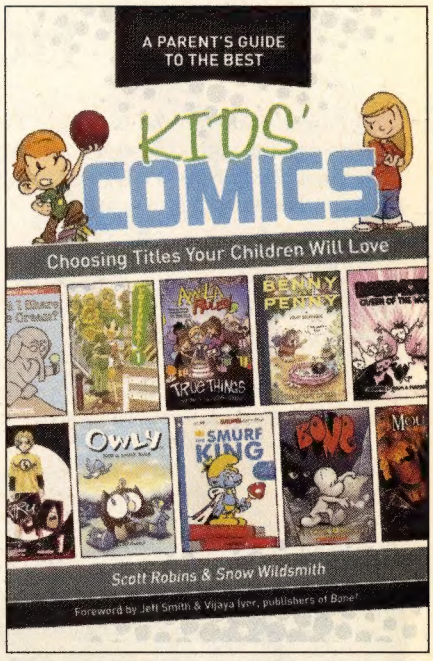
So it was that we began a search *outside* the collectors' field for the experts who would write this volume.

Library professionals and children's literature experts Snow Wildsmith and Scott Robins succeeded beyond our wildest expectations and even introduced us to many comics *we'd* never read, despite our decades of reading — and writing about — comic art.

Consider:

• Comic books were stereotyped for decades as being only for kids. That was even despite their beginnings as reprints of strips that had originally run in newspapers for *adults*. These days, though, comic books aimed at younger readers can be hard to find. "Comics aren't just for kids any more" has become a catchphrase — but the *catch* to that catchphrase is that adults looking for comics stories for *young* readers can find it challenging.

• Nevertheless, Jim Trelease, in his bestselling guide to developing avid readers, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, for more than a decade has made frequent comments promoting the importance and usefulness of series reading and comic books in developing readers. He cited, for example, the case of Sustained Silent Reading Guinness world record-holder Dr. Robert Allen, whose motivating reading at age 7 included Donald Duck comics. Trelease responded to the question "My son loves comic books — Is that good or bad?" by strongly recommending comics, concluding: "On the basis of my personal experiences and the research available, I would go so far as to say if you have a child who is struggling with reading, connect him or her with comics. If an interest appears, feed it with more comics."



• We designed *A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics* to be an *introduction* to our vast field. There are *many* excellent comics for young readers — and for those who enjoy sharing reading comics with those young readers. *Many* comics are, in fact, truly for "all ages" — and we just couldn't cram them *all* into our single volume. And comics *magazines* themselves go on and off sale too quickly for a trade paperback designed as an ongoing reference.

The goal, then, was to come up with a handbook that wouldn't overwhelm people who are looking for a quick survey of some of the terrific comic books they could find in comics shops, bookstores, and libraries.

So Snow and Scott came up with a list of 100 of the best — and then provided more, more, *more*.

• Kids' reading abilities differ. So what comics are best for what reading level? Scott and Snow sorted their recommendations by grade. Of course, all such suggestions are just that: If the reader is an eager, easy reader before beginning school, it's a simple matter to look at the next level. If the reader is still having trouble with word recognition or phonics, adults may choose to begin with choices in the first chapter — including those with little or no text.

• Some adults appreciate content cautions. Snow and Scott alert readers to content of possible concern in a "Heads Up" advisory where it's appropriate.

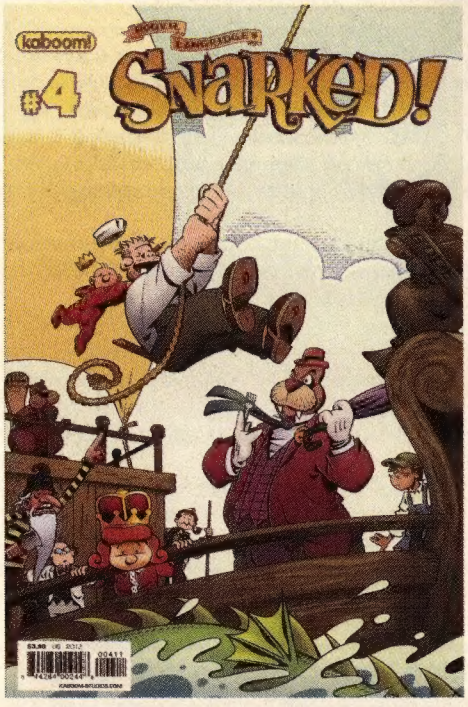
• It may be hard to find the wide variety of recommendations, even in a many-shelved Barnes & Noble. Our information includes ISBN numbers for quick location and publisher websites for more information, and we've included pricing current as of today, since that, too, is a concern for any buyer.

• In many cases, a recommendation is for a series that contains several volumes. Snow and Scott identify their titles and sequence of publication so that readers who want to begin at the beginning can do so.

• Oh, and when it comes to more ... Snow and Scott recommend "What's Next ..." options.

Take a look ☞

Have *you* read *Little Vampire? Adventures in Cartooning? Lila and Ecco's Do It Yourself Comics Club? Smile?*



Among the problems for adults hunting for kids' comics: locating a specific issue of a magazine. So, since *Snarked* is excellent, it's a periodical — and not included.

How to use the book

A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics is designed to provide parents with enough information about each title or series to make informed choices about graphic novels for their children. Each entry provides the following information:

Publication Information: For every title or series, you'll find the names of the creators, at least some of the volumes (in the case of a series), the publisher, and the year published. In the appendix, you'll find a full listing (including all the volumes in the series), including the ISBN (or International Standard Book Number). The ISBN can be used by a library or bookstore to help you find the exact volume you need.

Grade Level: The entries are divided into rough grade levels: PreK-1, 2-3, 4-5, and 6-8. These grade levels are *general* guides and should not discourage readers from reading "up" or reading "down," depending on their own personal reading levels, comfort levels, and/or interests. Sometimes, readers want something fun and easy to read; sometimes they want something more challenging.

Genres: Each book or series has been classified according to genre, sometimes multiple genres. These will give you a general idea of what the book is about and can help you choose titles that might appeal to your children, based on their interests. Genres included are:

adventure thrilling tales of excitement
early learning books that focus on basic educational concepts
fantasy tales of magic and other worlds
historical fiction books that provide a great way to experience the past
horror/paranormal comics that feature ghosts and monsters, both scary and silly
humor stories that leave kids laughing
memoir tale from a creator's life

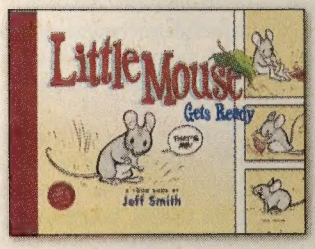
GRADE LEVEL: PRE-K-1

EARLY LEARNING • HUMOR

Little Mouse Gets Ready

Story and art by Jeff Smith

Toon Books, 2009
Color, 32 pages



When Little Mouse's mom tells him to get ready for a trip to the barn with his brother and sister, he is excited about all the things he can see and do. With his clothing all laid out, he begins dressing, working from the easiest (his underpants), to the most difficult (buttoning up his shirt). When Mama comes to check on her son, she sees something she didn't expect.

This complete departure from Smith's epic fantasy *Bone* (see page 160) is a deceptively simple story that not only identifies the names of pieces of clothing and shows children the sequence of putting them on, but is also a story of child empowerment and independence. Young readers will view themselves as Little Mouse and cheer on his perseverance, even with difficult tasks. The art is charming, with only one or two panels per page, and delivers plenty of visual jokes, culminating in the punchline at the end of the book.

AWARDS:
2010 Association for Library Service to Children Theodore Seuss Geisel Honor

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Independence; Clothing; Lesson plan available at *http://toon-books.com/lp_lmo.php*; Read online in English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese at *http://toon-books.com/rdr_one.php#lmo*

"WHAT'S NEXT ..."

BILLY TARTLE IN SAY CHEESE!
Story and art by Michael Townsend

Knopf, 2007
Color, 40 pages

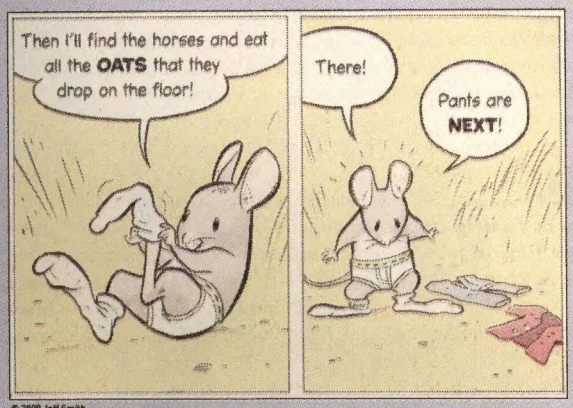
Children who have mastered the skill of dressing themselves and are ready to make decisions about their own clothing choices will appreciate Billy's unusual way of standing out on picture day at school. Townsend's comic is sillier than Smith's but (as in Smith's book) also offers a laugh-out-loud unexpected ending.

***CAT THE CAT* SERIES**
Story and art by Mo Willems

CAT THE CAT WHO IS THAT?
WHAT'S YOUR SOUND HOUND THE HOUND?
LET'S SAY HI TO FRIENDS THAT FLY
TIME TO SLEEP SHEEP THE SHEEP

Balzer and Bray, 2010
Color, 32 pages each

Cat the Cat enjoys asking her other animal friends questions such as what type of animal they are, what sounds they make, and whether or not they can fly. Beginning readers who were entertained by the simple story and surprising ending in Smith's *Little Mouse* will find the same uncomplicated silliness in Willems' series for young children.



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GRADE LEVEL: 6-8

ADVENTURE • SCIENCE FICTION • SUPER-HERO

Power Pack Classic Vol. 1

Story by Louise Simonson
Art by June Brigman, Bob Wiacek, and others

Marvel, 2009
Color, 256 pages

The Power children — Alex, Julie, Jack, and Katie — are rescued by an alien named Aelfyre Whitemane (also known as Whitey), after a race of lizard-like aliens called Snarks kidnap their parents. Whitey explains about their father's research into matter/anti-matter conversion and how The Snarks want to use his formula as a weapon to rule the galaxy. Mortally wounded, Whitey transfers each of his powers to the four children so that they can rescue their parents and save the world from destruction. In their new role as super-heroes, the children protect each other, work with other super-heroes, and practice their powers while trying to keep them secret from their parents.

First published as a comic-book series in the 1980s, *Power Pack* is still relevant today, with its stories of super-powered kids acting independently from their parents, taking risks, and learning how to control their special abilities — all popular elements in much of today's children's fiction. Simonson writes children as children with realistic dialogue, sibling friction, and authentic reactions to both the extraordinary and the mundane events in their lives. Brigman's art leans on the traditional super-hero side but features clean lines and strong facial expressions. This volume is a good introduction to other Marvel characters with a guest appearance by Spider-Man along with such lesser-known heroes as Cloak and Dagger. Subsequent volumes include more guest stars, but parents should note that later volumes do contain more mature content.

EDUCATIONAL TIE-INS:
Independence; Aliens; Heroes; Real-life issues

HEADS UP:
Contains some instances of realistic violence.

"WHAT'S NEXT ..."

TAKIO
Story by Brian Michael Bendis
Art by Michael Avon Oeming

Marvel/Icon, 2011
Color, 96 pages

Readers looking for more stories about kids and their discovery of super-powers may enjoy Bendis and Oeming's story of two sisters who are caught in a freak accident, gain telekinetic powers, and decide to become super-heroes.

GRADE LEVEL: 6-8

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mystery plots that involve detectives, clues, and something to solve
non-fiction true tales of science, history, and more
romance stories that celebrate young love
school & family stories that focus on life at school and in families
science fiction tales in which space is only the beginning
sports & games exciting stories where characters play to win
super-hero adventures of familiar heroes as well as new favorites
wordless graphic novels told without words, using only pictures in sequence to tell a story

Summary and Review: A brief synopsis summarizes the title or series, and a review details each entry's strengths and appeal.

Awards and Educational Tie-ins: Many of the titles we selected have won awards or been featured on recommended reading lists. Educational tie-ins will allow you — or your child's teacher — to link books to a school curriculum and identify some of the general themes or topics explored in each book. If there are educational materials available online, online links are provided.

Heads Up: This section provides alerts to challenging content and will help you decide whether a specific title is appropriate for a specific child. All the books we feature are for children and do not go beyond what's appropriate for each grade level, but these alerts will provide as much information as possible to help make informed choices.

What's Next: Recommendations for books with similar themes, stories, creators, or structure provide an easy suggestion for your child's next great reading choice.

This is truly a new age of comics for kids. There are many great titles today in addition to those that we've covered here. We urge you to go out to browse. Explore the world of graphic novels for your kids in libraries, bookstores, comic-book shops, and comic-book conventions. Your kids will thank you for it!

The book includes a 48-page appendix.

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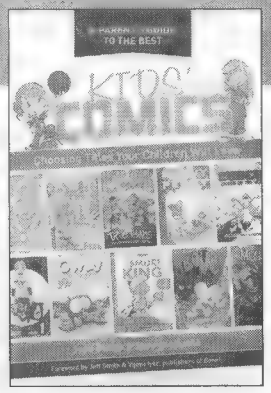


Coming up wih a cool project ...

It started with three questions

by **MAGGIE THOMPSON**

OUR GANG appearing in M-G-M pictures

(Above:) Walt Kelly, "Our Gang," *Our Gang Comics* #36 (Jul 47). (Below:) Charles Schulz, *Peanuts* strip #1 (1950). (Right above:) Jack Kent, *The Once-upon-a-Time Dragon* (1982). (Right below, left to right:) Ruth Krauss and Crockett Johnson, *The Carrot Seed* (1945); Munro Leaf, *Sam and the Superdroop* (1948).

CBG Editor Brent Frankenhoff and I were in the middle of an editorial meeting when we were asked **Question One**:

"What do your readers need that we can provide?"

We responded that our readers have repeatedly looked for an answer that we might provide for them for **Question Two**:

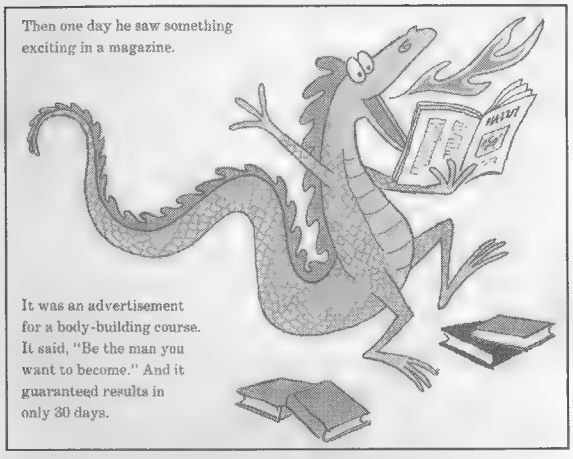
"What are the best comic books for today's young readers?"

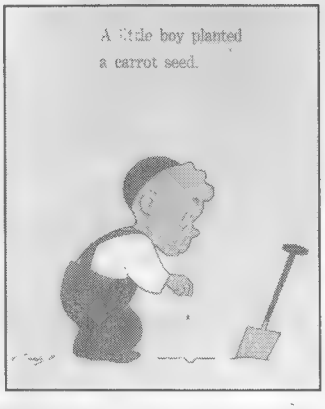
The reaction in the meeting was immediate and enthusiastic, **Question Three**:

"Can you put together a book that would answer that question?"

Well, Brent and I grew up learning to read, in part, with comic books. Comics virtually existed as a demonstration that reading was a form of entertainment, as well as instruction: Reading is fun. So we have often written and spoken about comics for kids — and our expertise along those lines was based in our own lives.

After all, as I discussed last month, there have been many ways in which comics have encouraged young readers over many years. For example, in this issue of ***CBG***, Tony Isabella refers (see page 26) to the way Walt Kelly demonstrated racial equality to young readers in the 1940s with subtlety and comedy. (Note in this instance that the resolution of dealing with con men is concocted by an adult working with teens — and that Kelly distinguishes the adult's speech pattern from that of those boys, though they all communicate on an equal footing.)





1. In Comes Superdroop

WHEN Sam was a little boy his mother and father used to read to him before he went to bed.

They would take turns doing the reading, Sam would listen to the good stories they picked out and they all had a pleasant time doing this together.

But when Sam learned to read by himself, his mother and father stopped reading to him and they even forgot to pay much attention to what he read himself.

One day at school during recess Sam traded an old broken cap pistol to Dave Hawkins for a comic book and from that time on he read just one comic book after another – nothing else. He traded for them, borrowed them, and spent all his allowance every week to buy them. For

(Above:) Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean, *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* (1997). (Right:) Art Baltazar and Franco, "Presenting the Super-Pets," *Tiny Titans* #28 (Jul 10).

When I was an assistant children's librarian in the mid-1960s, a major staff goal was to increase circulation. I suggested to fellow librarians that we include *Peanuts* reprints in our collection. I was told that such a proposal would be out of the question: "We wouldn't be able to keep the books on the shelves." In other words: Enthusiasm from the kids would make the volumes too much of a nuisance to deal with. But what a natural *Peanuts* would have been for our young readers, perfect for our audience from the very first strip!

Several cartoonists *did* turn out delightful children's books, transforming their projects into the more "acceptable" picture-book format for children. Jack Kent, whose *King Aroo* was a daily newspaper delight, produced classic kids' books. Crockett Johnson, whose *Barnaby* daily strip has long been recognized for its excellence, illustrated several of his wife's picture books — and created *Harold and the Purple Crayon.* Even Munro Leaf, whose *Watchbirds* cartoons appeared in *Ladies' Home Journal,* used his cartoons to illustrate a kids' book attacking comic books as children's literature.

Nevertheless, as noted, Brent and I grew up with comics as part of our respective personal libraries. We knew all about *that.*

But what about *today's* young readers? We're experts — but we knew we didn't qualify as experts on what we initially called *The Grownups' Guide to Kids' Comics.*We found Snow Wildsmith and Scott Robins, who have worked for years to identify and evaluate outstanding comics for kids. Snow has served on committees for the American Library Association and Young Adult Library Services Association. Librarian Scott contributes to Good Comics for Kids via *School Library Journal.com.* And those make up only a small portion of their credentials as experts in the field.

Once they set to work on the project, they nailed down, not only the books they wanted to recommend, but the expanded entries that would demonstrate those recommendations almost at a glance. Take a look at the samples on pages 8-9.

Snow and Scott have come up with more than 800 individual recommendations, complete with current price and ISBN identification, of books that can easily be found now. (The *Tintin* series by Hergé starting in 1929 is far from being the champ of the series, though Snow and Scott list 21 volumes. Heck, Dark Horse's *Little Lulu* publishing project, for example, runs to 29 volumes so far.) But the goal of our book was to provide a starting point, not a finite list beyond which nothing is of interest.

For example, though they're usually considered picture books, two of *my* favorite comics (complete with speech balloons and panels) for kids are by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean: *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* and *The Wolves in the Walls.*

And, of course, a search through comics both old and new can turn up more treasures. (I love *Tiny Titans*!)

Nevertheless, I bet you haven't yet sampled all the delights Scott and Snow turned up — because so many of them were new to me.

Have you seen what's out there for today's kids?

Photo © 2012 Maggie Thompson

MAGGIE THOMPSON knows she's run this photo umpteen times before. She'll probably run it again. So there. What have you found among outstanding comics for kids? You can add recommendations, be snarky, and/or make suggestions about the matter via *CBGXtra.com* or *Oh, So?* Maggie's website is *www.maggiethompson.com*, and she Tweets as *ThompsonMaggie.*

A history to rival their own handbook

Junior Woodchucks to the rescue!

by **MICHELLE NOLAN**

The first appearance of The Junior Woodchucks and their quest to collect the snow rescue merit badge with the help of Bornworthy from *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* #125 (Feb 51) has been reprinted numerous times, including *Gladstone Comic Album* #18 (Sep 89) and *The Carl Barks Library of Walt Disney's Comics & Stories in Color* #17 (May 93).

At the beginning of the Bronze Age, with the 12¢ comic book gone forever and a tumultuous decade facing the industry, what was the coolest issue published in 1970?

Many collectors will cite *Conan the Barbarian* #1 (Oct 70), the first four-color adaptation of one of fantasy fiction's most iconic characters.

Fair enough — but, for me, it was Gold Key's *Huey, Dewey, and Louie Junior Woodchucks* #5 (Apr 70). This was the issue that reprinted the first two appearances of the wily Woodchucks — wonderfully witty 10-page Donald Duck stories by Carl Barks that had appeared in *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* #125 (Feb 51) and #132 (Sep 51).

I couldn't be absolutely sure of the Woodchucks' history at the time — I had not yet acquired either an original or a reprint of every Barks Duck story — but I *did* realize I had never read any of the amazingly zany Woodchucks satires in the 1940s issues I had scrounged up second-hand.

The stories in #5 — labeled "Reprinted by Popular Demand" (!) with new logos and retitled "Test at Frostbite Pass" from #125 and "Ten Star Generals" from #132 — both had 1951 copyright dates, as did the indicia. (I had long since learned that Western Publishing listed both current and original copyright dates in the indicia whenever there were reprints in Gold Key and Whitman titles.) Of course, Barks had not drawn a Donald Duck 10-pager for *Comics & Stories* since 1966.

I had long read and loved the satiric delights of the Woodchucks stories, but here in *Junior Woodchucks* #5 were two reprinted true treasures. There was no origin story or anything like that — Barks just sprung the Junior Woodchucks on a public unprepared for a unique satire on masculinity and the Boy Scouts of America. Then, the master cartoonist spaced his Woodchucks epics so that they never suffered from over-exposure.

I read my first Woodchucks epic more than 50 years ago in a then-recent back issue of *Comics & Stories* #181 (Oct 55), in which the Woodchucks and their Girl Scout counterparts, the Junior Chickadees, tied in a monumentally difficult bridge-building contest. The wise and warm April, May, and June were not to arrive until the 1960s, but that didn't prevent this story from being a masterpiece.

I was always, therefore, forever after on the lookout for either new or reprint Woodchucks stories. Believe it or not, I also asked my librarian — at

From the nephews' first outing as Junior Woodchucks, acronyms were a part of nearly every story.

about age 9 or so — if there really was a *Junior Woodchucks Manual*, that fabulous fount of all valuable information. The response was, as I recall, a huge sigh and something like, "That must be out of one of those stupid comic books you're always reading!"

Nevertheless, I soldiered on, always keeping a keen lookout for Woodchucks stories. So, when *Huey, Dewey, and Louie Junior Woodchucks* #1 (Aug 66) appeared, I was ecstatic. Furthermore, these were *new* Woodchucks stories, albeit *sans* art by "the good duck artist." Even better, April, May, and June appeared in one of the stories: the five-page masterpiece "Helpless on Purpose," where the ever-clever girls play dumb in order to fool the boys into cooperating with them.

Alas, *Junior Woodchucks* #2 didn't appear for a full year until August 1967 and #3 not until 1968, all undated (unless you knew how to read the code in tiny lettering at the bottom of the first page). So you can imagine how enthusiastic I was when #4 (Jan 70) hit the stands, listed as a quarterly publication. Furthermore, the issue reprinted the hilarious Woodchucks-Chickadees story from *Comics & Stories* #181 (Oct 55) and another Woodchucks tale from #227 (Aug 59). When #5 followed three months later with what we now know were the first two Woodchucks stories, I was enchanted. I figured there would be more, not knowing how often the Woodchucks had appeared.

What I *didn't* realize was that, beginning with *Junior Woodchucks* #6 (Jul 70), Carl Barks would write a series of 24 Junior Woodchucks scripts through his last original comic-book work, the script for "Captains Outrageous" in #25 (Mar 74). All but two of these scripts, many of which dealt with arcane and amusing aspects of nature, ecology, and politics, ran from 12 to 18 pages in the inimitable manner of storytelling only Barks could provide. I first learned all this three decades ago, when I eagerly bought Michael Barrier's fabulous *Carl Barks and the Art of the Comic Book* (1981). If you want to read the full story of Barks' mixed feelings over this final series of stories in comics, see the superb volume *Carl Barks and the Disney Comic Book* by Thomas Andrae (2006).

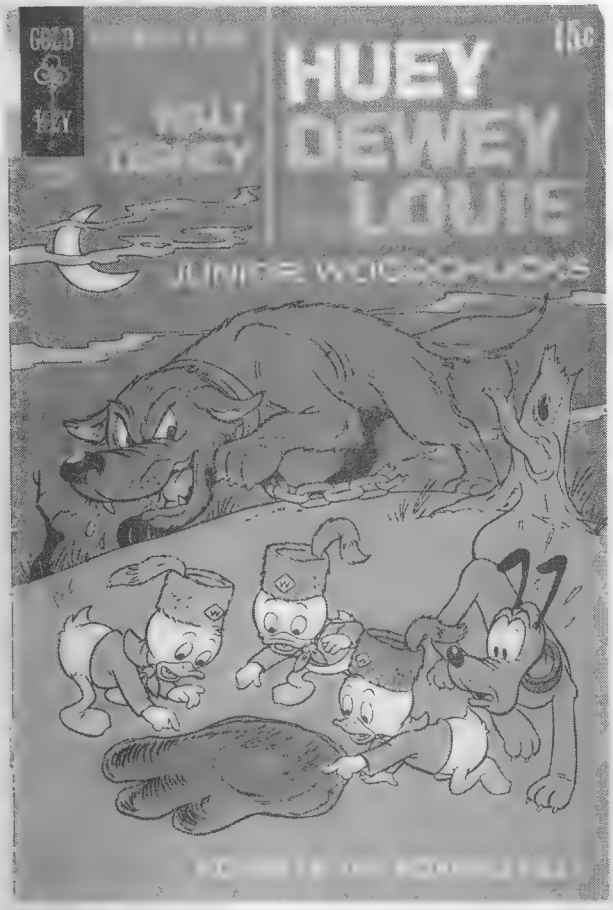
What I also couldn't comprehend when I read Barrier's treasure trove of information was that my beloved *Huey, Dewey, and Louie Junior Woodchucks* title would soon be history. The last issue was #81 (1984).

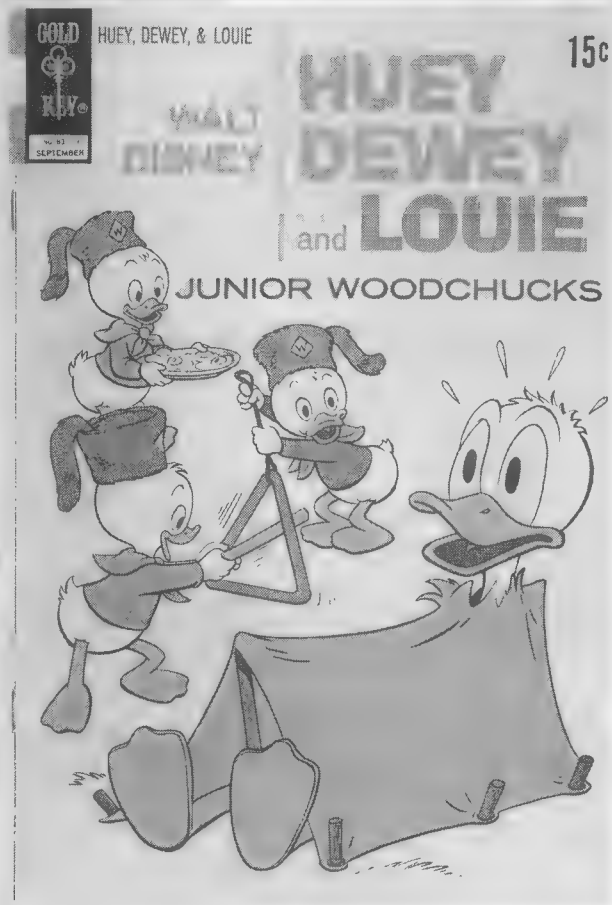
The *Junior Woodchucks* series has a fascinating story to tell against the backdrop of the comics industry's tough times in the 1970s: tough times that resulted in the creation of the direct market and thousands of comic-book stores.

Junior Woodchucks began as a 12¢ comic, like most of the rest, and went to 15¢ with the 1968 issue. The series then serves as a veritable inflation primer — 20¢ with #20 (May 73), 25¢ with #27 (Jul 74), 30¢ with #41 (Nov 76), 35¢ with #49 (Apr 78), 40¢ with #55 (Apr 79), 50¢ with #68 (Feb 81), and finally 60¢ with #72 (Feb 82). With each price increase, I was appalled, in my alter ego of Princess Penurious. Think about that — from 15¢ to 60¢ in less than a decade! Of course, little did we readers know what we would be in for in the *next* 30 years!

There was a one-year gap between *Junior Woodchucks* #74 (Mar 82) and #75 (Mar 83), though technically these didn't carry a monthly date. In 1982, when independent comics were in their earliest years, only six corporate publishers remained — Marvel, DC, and Archie, plus three others on their last legs — Western/Whitman, Harvey, and Charlton. Of the mere 69 titles produced continuously for a dozen years since *Huey, Dewey, and Louie Junior Woodchucks* began regular publication in 1970, only Western/Whitman published funny animals. Of Western/Whitman's 17 long-running titles in early 1982 (all started under the old Dell or Gold Key labels), 14 were funny animals, including seven Disney properties.

I'll digress a little, using comics historian Dan Stevenson's fabulous database, and note that Archie in 1982 had the only long-running teen titles in the industry: 17 of them, fully one-quarter of the entire long-running comics market! Marvel had 10 long-running titles, all super-heroes, and DC, the only other long-running super-hero publisher, featured heroes in 10 of its 13 titles. Richie Rich had four of Harvey's seven-long running titles, and Charlton's five such titles were weird or war titles except the





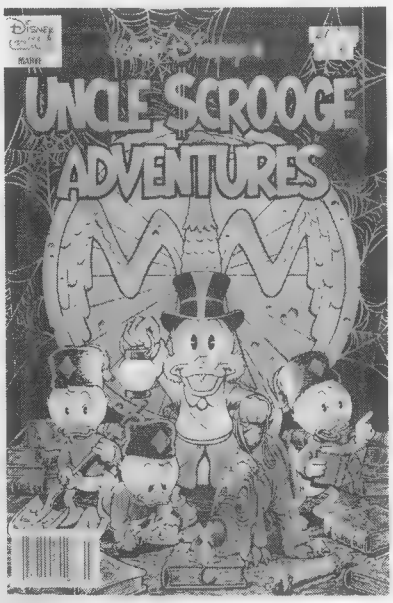
only long-established Western in 1982 — *Billy the Kid.*

As you can see, to maintain continuous publication for a dozen years from 1970 to 1982 was a remarkable feat for *Junior Woodchucks.* With minor variations, the title was essentially bimonthly throughout most of the 1970s, showing how well these cute duck kids sold. However, Whitman's erratic pre-pack and newsstand distribution resulted in few indicia dates for #65-81, and some of these issues are pretty hard to find. (Anyone have a #65? It's the only issue I'm still looking for.)

You can't go wrong on any Junior Woodchucks issue, what with pretty much the entire Disney duck cast finding their way through the series at one time or another. "The Courage Caper" in #72 (1982) even features Huey, Dewey, and Louie in duck drag, courtesy of Daisy Duck's need for models of costumes intended for April, May, and June. Donald Duck awards his nephews a special "courage trophy" for inadvertently venturing out into the community in a variety of venues in dresses, telling them, "It took great courage for you Woodchucks to run around today wearing Bo-Peep costumes!"

In true Western Publishing tradition through the Dell/Gold Key/Whitman years, none of the stories carried credits, even after other publishers began printing them on a regular basis in the 1960s and 1970s. But no matter — there are some 216 original stories in the 81-issue *Junior Woodchucks* series, along with a batch of reprints. All stories in the first seven issues were eventually reprinted, including a complete reprint of #1 in #80 (1984). When I surveyed the series again, I was surprised by how many of the stories were original.

"Test at Frostbite Pass," the debut of the Woodchucks, tells the amazing tale of how Huey, Dewey, and Louie became Five Star Generals, thanks to Donald's beloved St. Bernard, Bornworthy, who ironically hated snow! Three more merit badges, and Ten Star General status, follow in the next reprint in #5. You would be hard-pressed to find a funnier comic book anywhere than *Junior Woodchucks* #5!



An astounding variety of Woodchucks skills enable the plucky nephews to get Donald and Uncle Scrooge out of numerous scrapes in the 1950s and early 1960s non-Woodchucks "novels" in *Uncle Scrooge* and *Donald Duck*, right up to the end of Barks' storytelling days. *The Junior Woodchucks Manual* is constantly at hand and never fails. In fact, this is true right up to the last story in *Junior Woodchucks* #81, fittingly entitled "Junior Woodchucks Manual Test." Oh, for a copy of that precious book! ***[Editors' note:*** *Don Rosa revealed the Manual's origins in* ***Uncle Scrooge Adventures*** *#27 (Jul 94).]*

The third Woodchucks story in *Comics & Stories*, a bee-keeping adventure with a genuine satirical sting, appeared in #158 (Nov 53), followed by the "battles of the sexes" misadventure with The Chickadee Patrol in #181 (Oct 55), then a heroic effort to prevent a train crash in #195 (Dec 56) and the debut of The Official Woodchucks Hound in #213 (Jun 58), who also stars in the next Woodchucks adventure in #227 (Aug 59). Another Official Hound story follows in #276 (Sep 63), and the Woodchucks participate in several other Barks stories in the first half of the 1960s.

If you're looking for laughs and you're in the vicinity of back-issue comics, check out any issue of *Junior Woodchucks.* You'll be smiling long before you reach the final page.

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Not many heroes had siblings. Look what they missed out on!

The Jordan Boys!

by CRAIG "MR. SILVER AGE" SHUTT

Dear Mr. Silver Age,

I'm surprised that so many Silver Age DC superheroes had no siblings. Were there any who were part of a big family?

Johnny S.
Baxter Building

Mr. Silver Age says: It does seem odd that so many heroes had no brothers or sisters, Jack. What really were the chances of that? Of even more interest, why did writers cut themselves off from these potential plotlines, especially in a time when secret identities were a big deal and sibs could have complicated matters? A lost opportunity, to be sure.

It does seem odd that so many heroes had no brothers or sisters.

The possibilities can be seen in the rollicking Jordan family, which made occasional appearances in the pages of *Green Lantern*. Mr. and Mrs. Jordan had three sons, two of whom we met in "Green Lantern's Brother Act!" in *Green Lantern* #9 (Dec 61). The oldest of the three look-alike boys was Jack Jordan, a district attorney, while the youngest was Jim, a "happy-go-lucky" public-relations executive. The middle child, of course, was Hal, a famed test pilot who also happened to be The Emerald Gladiator!

That's right: Their parents named them John, Harold, and James. Middle children always have a tough row to hoe.

In truth, the saga of The Jordan Boys through the pages of *GL* did not so much tell the tale of their

We first met the other two Jordan brothers in *GL* #9, when Hal and Jim helped eldest brother Jack run for district attorney.

The brothers' tales mostly focused on Sue Williams' attempts, as in *GL* #14, to prove that Jim Jordan was GL. His denials were never convincing.

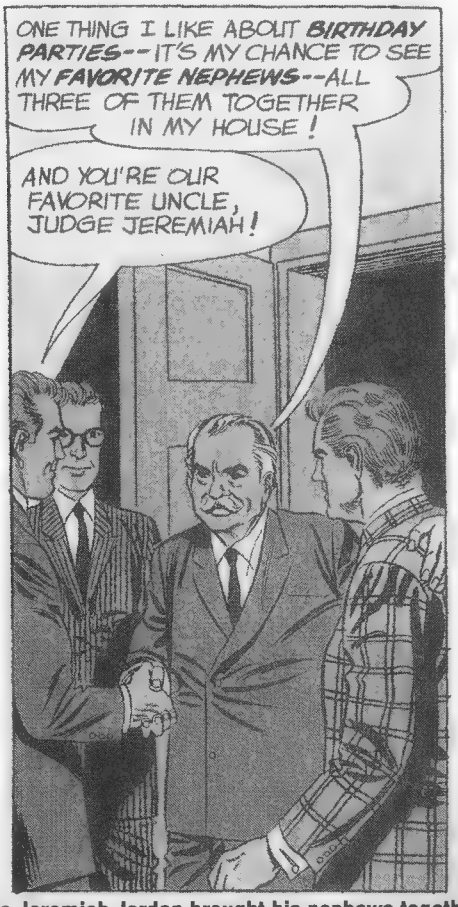
for running effective and successful campaigns. Jim, of course, handled publicity while Hal handled, um, other important stuff.

For instance, when leaflets had to be scattered, World War II-style, over town via airplane (kids, don't try this during your election campaign), Hal just picked them up with his ring and flew around scattering them everywhere. Fortunately, he stayed high enough that nobody connected GL to the campaign (or to Hal).

Meanwhile, Sue Williams was intent on exposing Jim's other identity. She suspected he was The Emerald Gladiator because he looked a lot like GL. Of course, her downfall came in focusing on Jim from among three brothers who looked a lot alike (one of whom used only a tiny little domino mask to disguise his features).

She confronted Jim with her suspicions, which he naturally denied, so she decided to catch him red-handed. Her chance came when crooks kidnapped Jack and she alerted Jim — and Hal, who overheard in the next room. Sure enough, as soon as she left, GL flew out the window, confirming her suspicions but giving her no proof.

By story's end, GL had taken care of the crooks, Jack had been elected D.A., and Sue Williams was more certain than ever that Jim Jordan was Green



Judge Jeremiah Jordan brought his nephews together to celebrate his birthday with a costume party in *GL* #22, giving Jim a chance to dress up as GL.

Lantern. She vowed to prove it — even if she had to marry him to do it! Yeah, ask Iris West how that'll work out. Even so, that is one devoted investigative journalist.

The boys reunited in "My Brother, Green Lantern!" in *GL* #14 (Jul 62), by which point Sue had, indeed, become Jim's girlfriend. The caption informed us she "fell in love" with Jim in the previous adventure, but I don't remember that part of the story.

The brothers attended their annual college-fraternity reunion (every year, guys?), during which they went hunting. That left Jack's home empty when Sue arrived — and she discovered Jim's power battery in his room! When he returned and was confronted, Jim explained that he was (wait for it) a sports-car hobbyist and he'd bought the large green antique headlight lamp from a junk dealer in town. Oh, brother.

The hunting expedition also gave Jim and Hal a chance to get their fraternity rings mixed up (don't ask), which created a problem, because Hal had disguised his power ring as his frat jewelry. That complicated matters for Jim when he used his ring later to prove he wasn't Green Lantern, only to have it prove he actually *was*. Needless to say, Hal was just as surprised separately when he found his power ring wasn't all that powerful when he changed to GL.

Hal discovered the switch when criminals kidnapped Jim, looking to steal his car lamp, which happened to contain a missing diamond. What were the chances?

GL caught up to them and used the ring on Jim's finger to make it look as if the ring on his own finger was doing all the damage, of which there was plenty. Then, he switched the rings so no one was the wiser — except for Sue, of course, who now had her suspicions confirmed, she thought.

We got a bigger picture of the Jordan family tree one year later in "Dual Masquerade of the Jordan Brothers!" in *GL* #22 (Jul 63). The gang got together to celebrate Uncle Jeremiah Jordan's 70th birthday. Complicating matters was that a criminal, Red Peters, who had been sentenced by Judge Jeremiah after prosecution by D.A. Jack, had just escaped from prison. On top of that, Peters had been captured by Green Lantern — who Sue had implied in a recent article was actually Jim. With girlfriends like that, who needs crazy exes?

Complications ensued, as Jeremiah revealed he'd decided to make his birthday party a costume party! But Jim had a cunning plan: He dressed up like Green Lantern, figuring that Peters would hesitate to attack the crowd seeing his enemy in their midst. Needless to say, Sue thought the costume fit perfectly. Complicating matters further, Jim pretended he really *was* GL to ensure Peters was fooled. D'oh!

Needless to say, an emergency arose and Hal decided to come to Jim's aid surreptitiously to ensure everyone thought he was GL. That seems a bit misguided, considering Jim then had no explanation for why his power ring actually worked.

The guest list no doubt was filled with Jordans during Jim's wedding to Sue Williams in *GL* #31, but we didn't learn about any new relatives.

Jim saw the downside to nepotism when he took on the personal publicity for Titus Thomas (aka Terrible Temper) Jordan in *GL* #44.

More complications arose when the fun-loving mayor came to the party dressed as Red Peters — as did Red Peters.

Ultimately, two Red Peters and two Green Lanterns wound up battling each other. When the dust settled, one GL was still standing. Hint: It wasn't Jim. But he was glad to take credit at story's end, when Sue handed out some sugar.

Jim finally popped the question, and Sue, still having no proof that Jim was GL, agreed to marry him. So in "Pay Up — or Blow Up!" in *GL* #31 (Sep 64), the Jordan boys reconvened for the wedding. But they were distracted by an evil scientist who threatened to send deadly radiation into every home in the community to blow them up unless he received (wait for it) one *million* dollars. That was apparently the going rate for evil-scientist plans in the '60s.

D.A. Jack, for some reason, was spearheading the operation to capture Dr. Evil Scientist, and Sue insisted that Jim step in as GL to keep her wedding from being disrupted. Being just this side of a Bridezilla, she also drove him out to the area where the villain was thought to be lurking and told him to get busy. He did, stumbling upon the scientist just as the real emerald deal did likewise.

Blinding green light ensued. Jim was left standing over the defeated evil scientist as Sue ran up, suspicions confirmed and wedding saved. Two weeks later, as they returned from their honeymoon, Jim noted that GL had been busy while he and Sue had been (ahem) busy, but Sue brushed it off as more emerald trickery.

We met more family members in "Saga of the Millionaire Schemer!" in *GL* #44 (Apr 64), when Jim agreed to handle publicity for Uncle Titus Thomas (aka Terrible Temper) Jordan, the millionaire from the title. Sadly, Uncle Titus also agreed to help his new niece Sue uncover the truth about Jim's secret identity, thinking that his nephew shouldn't keep secrets like that from his uncle.

Titus created a fake super-villain, called The Bottler — no, I'm not kidding — and ordered Hal to dress in the costume and pretend to break into Uncle Titus' mansion, so Jim would change to GL and defeat him. Complications ensued, as Jim saw Hal slipping into the costume — and then the *real* Bottler showed up!

Hal faced "The Menace of the Colicy Baby" when he agreed to babysit his new godson and nephew Howard in *GL* #53.

Sibling Tracker!

The lack of brothers or sisters for DC super-heroes is surprising. Only a few could claim any sibs.

• Superman had plenty of brothers: Bruce Wayne, Lex Luthor, even Kryptonian Knor-El. Sadly, they appeared only in Imaginary Stories. But he did have a cute cousin.

• Batman learned that he had a brother who was three years older in *World's Finest* #223 (May-Jun 74). Thomas was revealed to have had a brain injury as a child and had been institutionalized but now was loose. He appeared only twice before DC came to its senses.

• Wonder Woman didn't have any siblings, unless you count Wonder Girl and Wonder Tot, who were re-creations of herself at earlier ages, at least until Wonder Girl suddenly came to life to join The Teen Titans. Let's move on.

• The Sea King, as shown in *Aquaman* #29 (Sep 66), had a fully human stepbrother, Orm Curry, the son of Arthur's father and Mary O'Sullivan. He became Aquaman's arch-foe, so that didn't work out so well.

• J'onn J'onzz had a family, as revealed in *Detective Comics* #287 (Jan 61), that included a younger brother named (gulp) T'omm J'onzz. That's pretty unusual. His family apparently perished with the rest of the Martians during the planet's civil war, which was revealed in *Justice League of America* #71 (May 69).

Judging by this list, maybe it's just as well so few heroes did have siblings.

Yes, there was a real Bottler. He'd learned of Titus' plan and decided to use it to his advantage. Fortunately, the fake Bottler (aka Hal aka GL) put a stopper in this plan. But the mayhem left Uncle Titus and Sue still convinced that Jim had a secret.

Hal and Jim got together again in "Two Green Lanterns in the Family!" in *GL* #53 (Jun 67). Hal happened to be in town during his wanderings after quitting his job at Ferris Aircraft (long story) and he agreed to babysit for his new nephew and godson, Howard. Sue brought Hal up to date on Jim's suspicious activity, including the time Jim put on an old Green Lantern costume to stop Howie from crying. Aye carumba.

Hal faced similar infant caterwauling shortly after the Jordans fled to their car, and his initial emerald illusions didn't stop the wailing. So he took a page from Jim's book and changed into his GL costume to calm things down. Thus, the home front was peaceful when Jim called to check in, only to have a robbery break out at the play they were attending just as he talked with Hal. What were the chances?

After Jim got kayoed by the crooks and Green Lantern saved the day, Sue once again put one and one together and got green. Hal helped later by sending Howie a Green Lantern onesie (which you can buy online today!), making the title even truer than before.

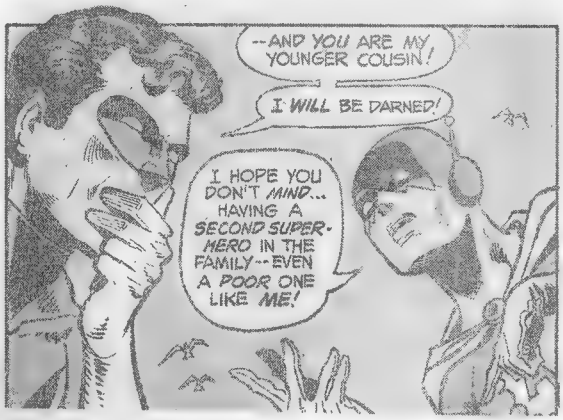
Hal returned for Howie's first birthday in "This Is the Way ... the World Ends!" in *GL* #63 (Sep 68). But the celebration was short-lived, as Hal was suddenly pulled away to another planet by aliens. That was the last we saw of the nuclear Jordan family, and we never *did* hear how Hal explained that one away.

Doug "Hip" Jordan, cousin to the Jordan brothers, made his only visit to the annual Jordan reunion in *GL* #71, the only year GL readers attended, too.

The whole fam damily got together for the "annual" Jordan family reunion in "Hip Jordan Makes the Scene!" in *GL* #71 (Sep 69), which was tagged as "A Green Lantern Brothers Story." That was pretty ironic, considering it was the last time they got together.

The story introduced us to cousin Doug Jordan from Tennessee, who went by the unfortunate moniker "Hip." But we also spied a middle-aged woman, possibly Jack's wife by now, who was scolding her son Steven.

Mayhem, of course, ensued, including a variety of unfortunate hippy-dippy antics by Hip and the usual antics by Sue, who forced Jim to dress up in a handy Green Lantern costume to handle a problem. The final panel, back at the party, showed an older woman, a mustachioed older man, and another younger woman. But we never learned their relation to the Jordans.



In *GL* #100, Hal learned his Uncle Larry (the Golden Age Air Wave) had had a son, creating two super-heroic cousins named Hal Jordan.

But we *did* learn of another branch of the Jordan family tree much later, in "Rider of the Air Waves" in *GL* #100 (Jan 78), which introduced a new Air Wave hero. GL met him, at which time Air Wave revealed they had something in common: their name! The new Hal Jordan was the son of Hal's Uncle Larry, whom we'd never met (but who had been the original Air Wave back in the Golden Age). Thus, the new Air Wave Hal Jordan was the cousin to the old GL Hal Jordan.

The new Hal went on to a regular career in GL, learning the ropes from his older cousin. He branched off into his own stories in *Action Comics* in the 1980s, where we also met nephew Jason and nieces Jennifer and Jan. The Jordan family returned many, many years later, after Hal became The Spectre. By then, GL had more problems than discouraging his sister-in-law's suspicions about the wrong Jordan's secret identity.

Known to fans worldwide as "Mr. Silver Age," **CRAIG SHUTT** has waxed nostalgic about comics of old in **CBG** since 1992. Send comments and suggestions to **craigshutt@ameritech.net**.

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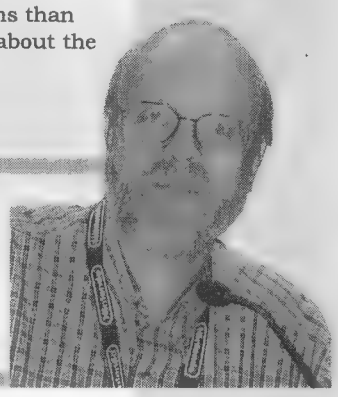


The Captain confesses

Rectifying a reprint ruh ... ruh ... ruh ...

by **ANDREW A. "CAPTAIN COMICS" SMITH**

The Captain's readers — honorary members of The Legion of Superfluous Heroes, all! — have been pretty vocal of late. This month's mailbag contains questions about comic strips, the best "Favorite Find" story I've ever heard, plus ... the unthinkable.

Let's begin with the latter, while I still have the courage. Brace yourselves, dear readers, as I impart to you a fact of life that will stun you into disbelief. There also might be some rending of clothing, tearing of hair, and gnashing of teeth, so perhaps the children should leave the room.

You see, my brethren and cistern, there are, on very, very rare occasions, times when Captain Comics is, ah, not entirely accurate. That is to say: a hair off target. A fact honored in the breach rather than the observance. Conclusions unsupported by the data.

Or, in layman's terms, "wrong."

There are numerous Flash Gordon reprint volumes, many collecting the work of creator Alex Raymond, while others are devoted to the series' other creators.

Such was the case in "The Growth of Reprints" (***CBG*** #1687, Mar 12), regarding "Flash Gordon." Legionnaire **Dennis Roy** of **Lawrence, Mass.**, gently offered this correction:

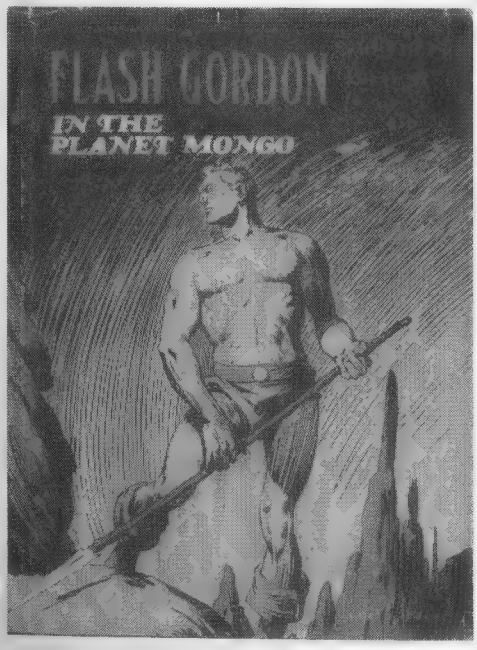
Dear Cap: Like you, I am a fanatical collector of classic reprint volumes. Having just read this month's ***CBG*** column, I felt I had to point out a couple of mistakes in the section covering Flash Gordon.

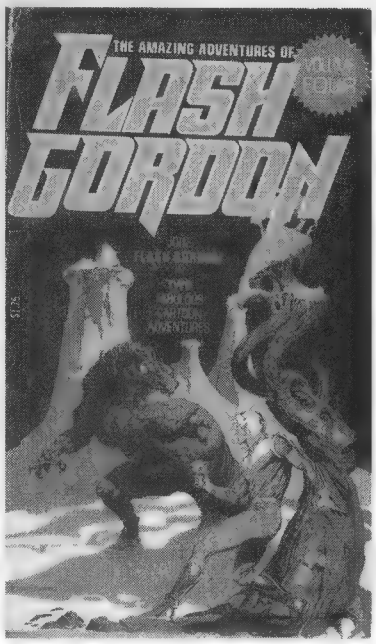
Quote: "Currently, the Alex Raymond daily strips are available from both Checker and Kitchen Sink. But the Sundays haven't been reprinted as often and never in their original size — until now."

That's completely wrong, except for the part beginning with "... never in their original size." The Kitchen Sink *FG* reprints are now out of print, although new, unused copies of some volumes may still be available from some sellers [while] the Checker Books reprints are still in print. And, in fact, both the Kitchen Sink and Checker Books series reprint the same material — *Sunday* strips, from the beginning (as did an earlier series from Nostalgia Press in the 1960s and 1970s). So, except for format (and the *Jungle Jim* topper), the *Flash Gordon* strips that IDW will reprint will be the exact same story material as that from the earlier companies.

Flash Gordon daily strips have thus far only been reprinted three times. The first instance was a series of five Tempo Books mass-market paperback reprints of the 1970s Dan Barry-Bob Fujitani strips, which came out in the 1980s. Good luck finding these.

The next reprinting of daily *FG* strips was from





Kitchen Sink in 1988: a single-volume collection of Dan Barry strips (with assistance by Harvey Kurtzman and Frank Frazetta on some strips) from the 1950s, from when the daily was first revived after a long hiatus. Rick Norwood privately printed a sequel volume, *Flash Gordon: Star over Atlantis*, in 2007 (this picks up right where KS's volume left off).

The next instance was a two-volume collection of the first run of *FG* dailies (illustrated by Austin Briggs, from 1940-1942) by Kitchen Sink that came out in 1992-1993. Not sure, but this might have been the entire run of the strip in the 1940s.

Other than that, love the column.

The Captain responds: You love, what, the byline? The paper grade? My utter humiliation? *Sob!*

Seriously, Dennis, you are completely correct, and I was Ruh-ruh-ruh ... Ruh-rawww ... Raw-uh-uh ... Well, I was not. I have a smattering of most of the collections you mention — even the Dan Barry volume from 1988 — but I never had enough to know exactly what I had or where they fit into the canon. So I made bad assumptions. Now, thanks to *you*, I know exactly what they are — just in time for most of them to be made superfluous by the beautiful, oversize *Flash Gordon and Jungle Jim* series from IDW, which not only lushly restores the strips and prints them in their original size, but offers insightful commentary and analysis, as well.

Now that I've taken my well-deserved lumps, let's move on to the promised "Favorite Find" story, from **Robert Sutliff** of **North White Plains, N.Y.:**

Dear Cap: Those were some great "Favorite Find" stories in ***CBG*** #1689 (May 12). Here's my own personal one.

I started collecting the top Marvel titles in late 1964, all of which I still have today. However, I was missing the key numbers #1-#15 or so of each title (in the case of Thor, it was *Journey into Mystery* #83 up). Of course, there was no such thing as the Internet, direct market, major conventions, or even close contact with "comic-book dealers."

The years ticked by until 1971, when I was in college and working a midnight-shift job in Manhattan. I got out at 8 a.m. on a Sunday morning, with a paycheck ready to be cashed on Monday. As I headed back to Queens, I gave an idle thought to the fact that it was a "Second Sunday," when Phil Seuling held a monthly comic-book "convention" at the Statler Hilton (now the Pennsylvania Hotel) across the street from Madison Square Garden. As I was changing trains at Penn, I decided to go up and have a look, even though the doors wouldn't be open yet.

Realizing that I had very little money, I managed to cash my check at Penn Station, something I would *never* normally do. As I waited outside the Statler, I noticed a gentlemen pleading with a hotel staff member for assistance or advice. Seeing me, he called me over and told me his situation: He had arrived in New York City from out of town, assumed he could park at the hotel (hah!), and expected to have help carrying in his boxes full of comics to sell. Instead, he was stuck curbside without help.

He proposed that, for a cash compensation, he would wait with his car, while I carried his boxes up to his designated area, secured them, and awaited his arrival. I could tell he was from out of town by the amount of trust he placed in a stranger from NYC! But, being a nice fellow, I agreed. (After all, I would get paid for this and get into the convention *free*, as well.) After all was delivered and he joined me upstairs, he further requested that I help him unbox his books and set them up, since he was now running late.

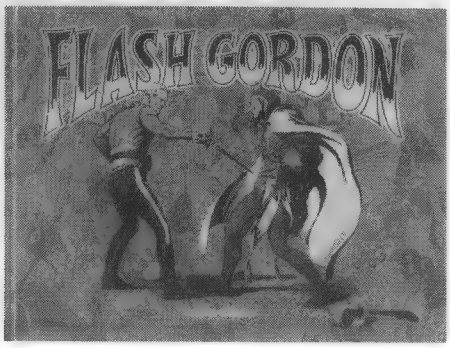
The doors hadn't opened yet, and I was eager to peruse the room, but what the heck? I decided to help him again. Soon, my eyes were bulging after we started loading heap after heap of *complete* comics runs (#1 up) of every Marvel title.

When all was done and he asked me what I thought was a fair wage for my assistance, I made a counter-offer. I would pay *him* for first crack at all of his comics. He gracefully said yes, and I skimmed issues #1-#15 off every pile. Even at 1971 prices, the cash total was still more than an average person would carry around (and credit cards were not abundant), but luckily I had the money from my cashed check! Thanking him, I headed for the exit just as the doors opened for the day.

In my retreat, I heard onlookers reaching his table exclaim "What a great find! But where are the first 15 issues of each title?" In my bag, friends, in my bag. And so that set of crazy coincidences on that crazy day gave me the core of my collection. It was my greatest find!

The Captain responds: And what a find it was! I admit to both jealousy and awe ... well, mostly jealousy. You wouldn't perchance care to part with the first six issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*, would you? I didn't think so.

Anyway, congratulations, Robert! ***(Editors' note:*** *You'll see the winner of our Fantastic Finds contest next issue — as well as many of the other entries.)*



A portion of Robert Sutliff's massive 1971 haul. He estimates that it cost him about $400 at the time.

Let's change the subject, before the rest of us burst into tears. Here's a query from **Tim Markin** of **Erie, Pa.,** that I hope some publisher out there can answer.

Dear Cap: Hello, regular reader of your column here. However, I couldn't figure out how to post on your blog, so I'm writing to you directly. *(**Captain's Note:** You can post a reply on any of my columns at **CBGXtra.com** and I can also be found at **captaincomics.ning.com.**)*

I, too, feel lucky that there are so many reprints available today (although I can't afford to buy most of the ones I want), since I can remember back in the '70s when reprints were few and far between. I am a fan of the classic newspaper strips, and, back then, you rarely saw them — or else they were in mass-market paperback size. (I fondly recall the Dragon Lady Press and Blackthorne books of the '80s.) However, there is one classic series I am writing about that I have yet to see reprinted in America: the Saunders-Overgard years of *Steve Roper & Mike Nomad*. I know *The Commercial Appeal* [in Memphis, Tenn.] carried it (My ex-wife lives in Memphis, so I did see it there when I visited the city.) but not sure what years it was there.

I grew up in Toledo, Ohio, where Allen Saunders wrote the *Roper* strip, along with *Mary Worth* and *Kerry Drake* (both of which have had reprints published). I discovered it back in 1977 and clipped it every day. It was neat knowing that my favorite comic strip was being written mere miles from my home, and in the 1980s I was lucky enough to visit Allen's son John at his downtown Toledo office after he replaced his retired and deceased father on the strips, to discuss my love of the Mike Nomad character. (He said that Mike Nomad was modeled after a Marine in a Marine Corps magazine, but I really think the Mike Nomad of 1956 bore a strong resemblance to actor Jeff Chandler.)

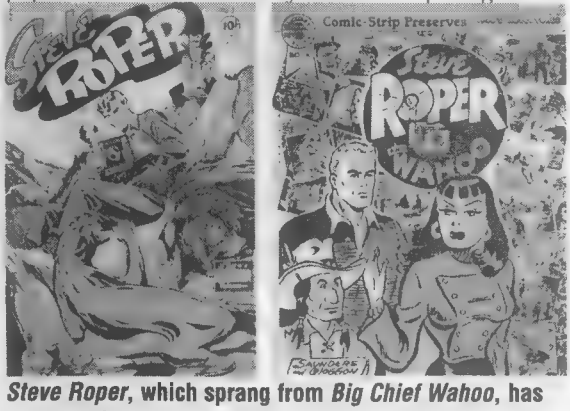
As a cartoonist, my dream was to write and draw the Roper-Nomad strip. (And nearly every comic I created was in some way inspired by the strip. In my own comic book, *Breakneck Blvd.*, for Slave Labor, I envisioned Pall Blighter as a gay Mike Nomad.)

My point is that, with all the classics being reprinted, I think Steve Roper and Mike Nomad are due their own reprint series. I admit that William Overgard's early comic-book work was somewhat crude, but his work on *Steve Roper* beginning in 1954 (along with Nomad's subsequent introduction in 1956) was the high point of adventure strips. Allen and John Saunders' scripts were oh-so-literate and very topical, as they dealt with contemporary con games throughout the 1950s into the 1980s.

I have been tempted to write to some editor at Fantagraphics or IDW or some other publisher to appeal to their sensibilities and do the Roper-Nomad strip justice. Do you have any interest or familiarity yourself with the strip? (I remember Sergio Aragonés telling me at a con about reading the strip in a Mexican paper in the '60s and the Hernandez Brothers claiming to be fans.) Do you think there would be any interest from any publisher? Do you think I would be wasting my time trying to appeal to any editors?

Sorry to ramble on so, but I am looking forward to your point of view and pick your brain if you, too, are familiar with the strip.

The Captain responds: How could I not be, Tim? I grew up in Memphis, and the Li'l Capn loved comic strips so much he cut all of them out of *The Commercial Appeal* (and the now-defunct *Memphis Press-Scimitar*) and glued them into individual notebooks. Alas, I threw those all away when paperback collections of my favorite strips began



***Steve Roper*, which sprang from *Big Chief Wahoo*, has been reprinted in a five-issue Famous Funnies series in 1948 (left) and a Blackthorne reprint album (right).**

By the 1960s, the strip was *Steve Roper & Mike Nomad* and the duo did appear together from time to time.

appearing, but I remember *Steve Roper & Mike Nomad* vividly.

Actually, what I remember was wondering why the strip was named *Steve Roper & Mike Nomad* when I never saw this Steve Roper person. In fact, I remember wondering if it was some sort of in-joke for longtime readers, like a second identity for Nomad when he went undercover. Which he never did. Nor did he seem bright enough to do anything of the sort. But I was young and probably none too bright myself.

Anyway, I know that Chris Ryall of IDW often reads this column, so I'm hoping he's reading now and has plans for Steve Roper. And it wouldn't hurt to write him, Tim, or Mike Richardson at Dark Horse or Terry Nantier at NBM Publishing. They're all hip-deep in newspaper reprints, and an inquiry might inspire them to check into the strip. I hope so, because I'd still like to know who this Steve Roper dude is.

We've room for one more question about comic strips, so here's one from **Phil Wagner** of **Arlington, Texas.**

Dear Cap: While reading your article in ***CBG*** #1687 about the current run of reprint volumes that are now becoming available, I noticed the praise you were lavishing on the upcoming books reprinting the classic *Prince Valiant* and *Flash Gordon* comic strips, and I had to ask if you have been keeping up with the current *Prince Valiant* comic strip, which has been featuring a fanboy crossover (at least for this fanboy of the classic King Features adventure comic strips) with *Flash Gordon.* And, if you have, what has been your take on this unlikely team-up?

The Captain responds: My local paper doesn't carry *Prince Valiant,* but I'm familiar with the subject, since it has Legionnaires on my website swooning in fanboy ecstasy. Because, as you state, it is exactly the sort of dream crossover that would make any fanboy or fangirl squeal like a robot being karate-chopped by Magnus, Robot Fighter. So what do you *think* is my reaction to such a thing coming into existence?

(Hint: "Squeeeeee!")

ANDREW SMITH, has been writing professionally about comics since 1992 and for ***CBG*** since 2000. He can be reached at ***capncomics@aol.com*** or on his website, ***http://captaincomics.ning.com.***

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Doing it by the numbers

A breakdown of the comics of late 1951

by **TONY ISABELLA**

My mother groan'd, my father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt.
— William Blake (1757-1827)

The theme of this month's ***CBG*** is children's comics and, in keeping with that theme, I will reveal that I was once a child. I was born on Dec. 22, 1951, and I'm still reading comics.

Due to a nifty website known as *Mike's Amazing World of Comics (http://www.dcindexes.com/)*, I have become fascinated with the comic books that hit the newsstands in the month of my birth. Mike's site has a feature that allows one to view the covers of comic books published in any month. The comics industry then was very different from the comics industry of today. Let's consider this for a moment.

I have become fascinated with the comic books that hit the newsstands in the month of my birth.

Mike's Amazing World shows 153 comics published in my birth month, but that is clearly not the complete total. Only 12 publishers are represented. Among the omissions: *Classics Illustrated*, American Comics Group (ACG), Magazine Enterprises (ME), and Lev Gleason. Noting that I am, thus, working with an incomplete list, here are some nonetheless interesting statistics I've compiled on these 153 issues.

Marvel was the most prolific of the publishers, releasing 33 comic books or 22% of the issues listed.

Marvel	33 issues	(21.6%)
Fawcett	30 issues	(19.6%)
DC	24 issues	(15.7%)
Dell	24 issues	(15.7%)
Harvey	15 issues	(9.8%)
Quality	10 issues	(6.5%)
Archie	6 issues	(3.9%)
Charlton	3 issues	(2%)
E.C.	3 issues	(2%)
Fiction House	3 issues	(2%)
Eastern Color	1 issue	(0.65%)
United Features	1 issue	(0.65%)

Licensed properties account for 62 of these titles. That works out to 40.5% of the comics published that month. Noting there will be some overlap, here's that breakdown by genre:

Humor	28 issues	(45.1%)
Western	17 issues	(27.4%)
Comic Strip	17 issues	(27.4%)
Celebrity	16 issues	(25.8%)
Funny Animal	12 issues	(19.4%)
Adventure	6 issues	(9.7%)
Crime	4 issues	(6.5%)
Teen Humor	3 issues	(4.8%)
Science Fiction	2 issues	(3.2%)

Breaking down these comics by genre, humor was the leader with 41 titles. In the list below, I broke *that* down into such sub-categories as funny animals, teens, babes (for lack of a better description for *Millie the Model* and others), domestic, kids, and miscellaneous (for *Adventures of Bob Hope* and other titles that didn't easily fit anywhere else). Here's what I ended up with:

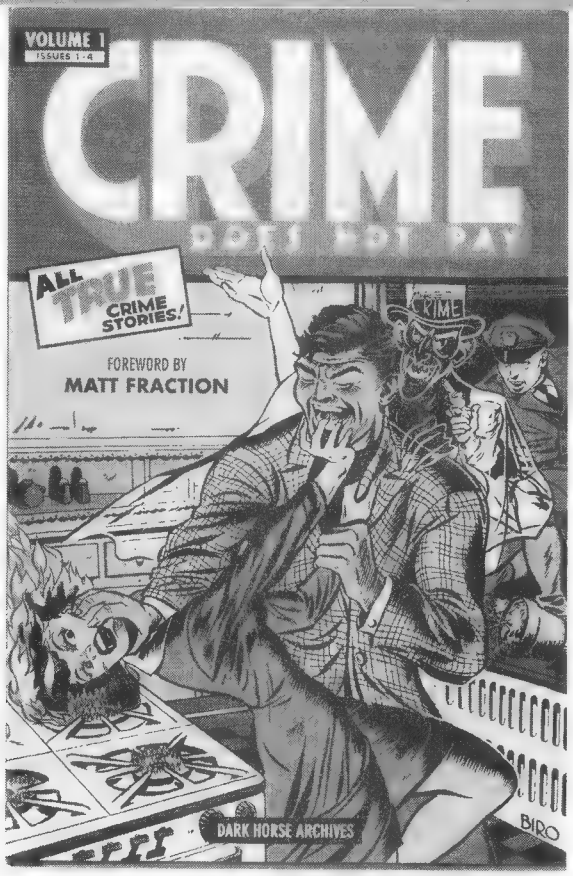
Western	27 issues	(17.7%)
Romance	21 issues	(13.7%)
Funny Animal	17 issues	(11.1%)
Crime	16 issues	(10.5%)
Horror	14 issues	(9.2%)
Super-Heroes	12 issues	(7.8%)
Adventure	12 issues	(7.8%)
Teen Humor	9 issues	(5.9%)
War	5 issues	(3.3%)
Miscellaneous Humor	5 issues	(3.3%)
Science Fiction	4 issues	(2.6%)
Kids Humor	4 issues	(2.6%)
Domestic Humor	3 issues	(2%)
Babes Humor	3 issues	(2%)
Sports	1 issue	(0.7%)

If the above interests you, I've been writing about the comic books published in my birth month in "Tony Isabella's Bloggy Thing" at *http://tonyisabella.blogspot.com/*

Next time around, assuming I haven't blown out my math skills this time around, I'll crunch the numbers for the comics published last December, six decades from my birth month. I hope my abacus is up to such a huge undertaking.

Crime ruled a major chunk of the comic-book turf in my birth month, and no crime comic was more famous or notorious than Lev Gleason's groundbreaking *Crime Does Not Pay*. Modern-day publisher Dark Horse has recently published two collections of stories from the title, giving today's readers a good sense of what those oft-reviled comic books were like.

Crime Does Not Pay Archives Vol. 1 ($49.99) reprints the first four issues of the series, which took its numbering from Gleason's *Silver Streak Comics*. Right from the start, *Crime Does Not Pay*



went big and brutal. The cover of #22 (Jul 42) has bodies on the floor and bodies falling from stairs. Inside, editors Charles Biro and Bob Wood presented "true crime cases" of such 1930s gangsters as Louis Lepke to Old West outlaws to serial killers and others.

Somewhat out of place in that first issue was the origin of super-hero Air Eagle. His adventure was probably not based on any true crimes, and I suspect the same can be said for the "Be a Detective" feature, which challenged readers to solve a mystery. True or not, Norman Maurer's "The Blackout Murder Mystery" was an entertaining addition to the issue.

A foreword by the fine comics writer Matt Fraction dwells overmuch on the forbidden lure of *Crime Does Not Pay*, but my own newfound interest in the title isn't any sort of "bad boy" attraction. It's seeing grim crime history transformed into exciting and sometimes literate comics scripts, and drawn by artists who would rank among the industry's best. It's recognizing that "crime does not pay," while certainly true in the long run, wasn't without profit up to that inevitable conclusion. In a world in which such things were not spoken of to youngsters, these gritty stories gave an inkling that sometimes bad guys *do* get away with it. That inevitable triumph of good over evil wasn't a guarantee in real life.

Had I been a parent in the 1940s, I don't know if I'd have been OK with my children reading *Crime Does Not Pay*. At least not until they were well into their teens. But, as a comics reader and student today, I'm delighted to be able to read these "disreputable" comic books and recommend this volume to others of like mind.

www.darkhorse.com
ISBN 978-1-59582-289-5

Blackjacked and Pistol-Whipped: A Crime Does Not Pay Primer (Dark Horse, $19.99) is a less expensive way to sample the grisly wonder of the title. Reprinting stories from 1942 through 1948, this book spotlights some seriously scary criminals and killers and art from some of the best artists of the 1940s. Dick Briefer's visuals for "So Mean He'd Kill His Own Mother" are positively manic, and he goes even further in "The Horror Hobby." Also represented in this book are Bob Montana, Carmine Infantino, Rudy Palais, Dan Barry, George Tuska, and Fred Guardineer.

Comics writer Brian Azzarello's brief introduction brought a grin to my face, as he wrote of finding his first *Crime Does Not Pay* in the dusty boxes of Cleveland's legendary Kay's Book Store. If you lived in the area and were into books in the 1960s and early 1970s, you went to Kay's as often as you could.

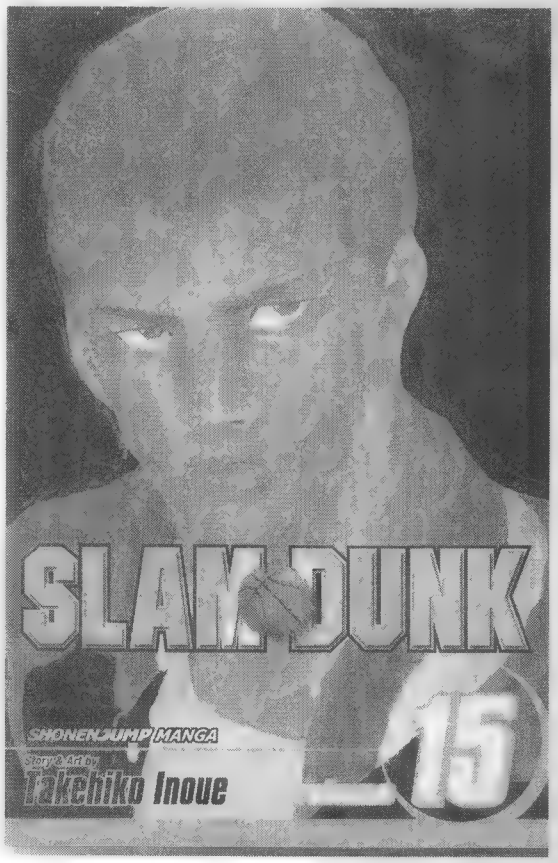
The highlight of the book is "Biro and Wood: Partners in Crime" by Denis Kitchen. The noted comics artist, publisher, and historian gives readers a riveting history of *Crime Does Not Pay*, including the tragic story of Bob Wood, who went from working on some of the most successful comics of the 1940s to gruesomely murdering a lover in a New York hotel. Peter Poplaski's cover portrays that crime as chillingly as the Charles Biro covers that enticed readers to the original *Crime Does Not Pay* comic books.

Blackjacked and Pistol-Whipped delivers great bang for your bucks. It should have been nominated for an Eisner Award.

www.darkhorse.com
ISBN 978-1-59582-290-1

Had I been a parent in the 1940s, I don't know if I'd have been OK with my children reading *Crime Does Not Pay*.

Viz is known for bringing some of the best anime and manga to the United States and, indeed, the world. By way of example, I'm currently reading and thoroughly captivated by ***Slam Dunk***, Takehiko Inoue's series about a high-school basketball team. I finished Vol. 15 ($9.99) just prior to writing this month's column and was on the edge of my seat from start to finish. Inoue will sometimes devote an entire chapter to a minute or less of a tournament game, and the excitement never wanes. One of my favorite comics series, *Slam Dunk* has no equal in the tragically limited field of American sports comics.



Viz also publishes the occasional prose novel. Hiroshi Yamamoto's

With likeable heroes, scary *kaiju*, and amusing nods to the giant monsters of the movies, *MM9* is great fun.

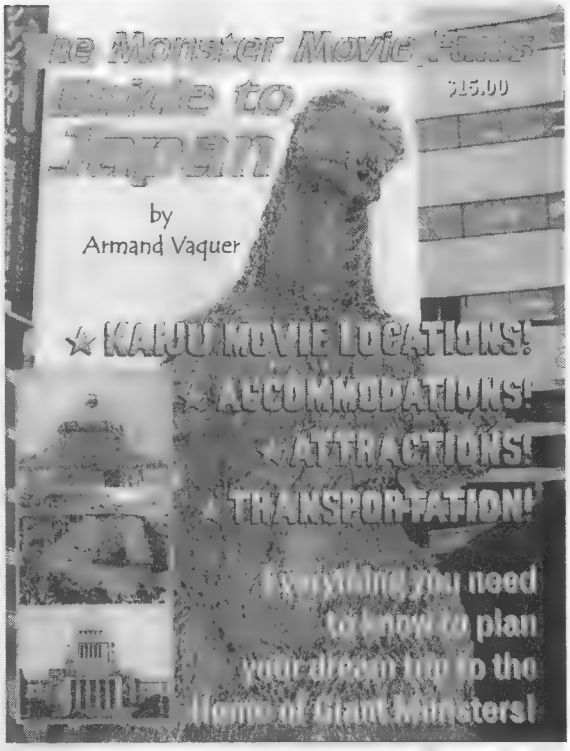
MM9 ($14.99) is made for a *kaiju*-loving fan like me. Translated by Nathan Collins, this anthology-slash-novel features interconnected stories of Japan's Meteorological Agency Monsterological Measures Department: government workers changed with protecting Japan from "natural disasters" of monstrous mein. The Agency investigates all monster reports, studies the creatures, rates the danger they pose, and advises the military on how to deal with them. On a scale of 1 to Ieyeeee!, *MM9* is way up there. With likeable heroes, scary *kaiju*, and amusing nods to the giant monsters of the movies, *MM9* is great fun. As pastor of the First Church of Godzilla (Reform), I recommend this book to all my readers ... and, if you wondering about my recently formed religion:

We believe and trust in the Great Scaly One who will always protect us with his fiery atomic love. It can be a tough love at times — what with the folly of man often making us our own worst enemies — but it is a fair love that embraces all mankind. Because, when you get right down to it, Republicans and Democrats, blacks and whites, Arabs and Jews, all scream pretty much the same as they are being squished beneath the feet of Lord Godzilla. He is a true unite-er.

Well, maybe not so much a unite-er as a mashing-us-together kind of deity, but the dues are cheaper than Scientology.

www.haikasoru.com
ISBN 978-1-4215-4089-4

If you're planning a pilgrimage, I mean, a vacation to the Land of Giant Monsters, you should

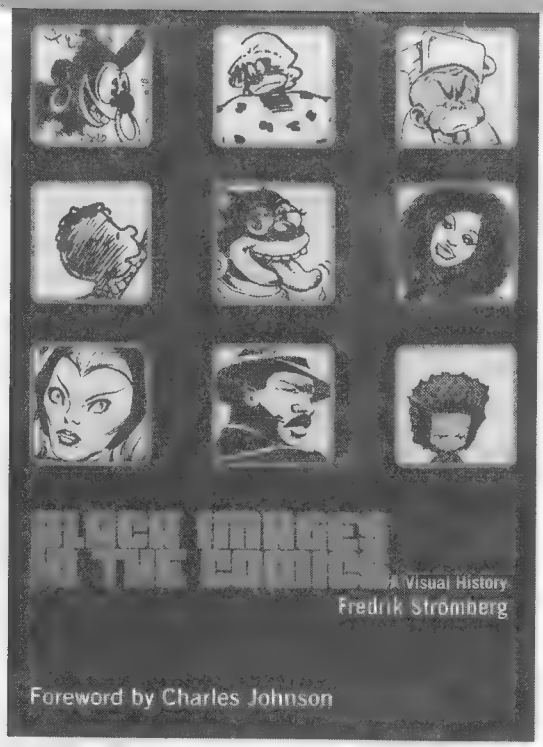


first score a copy of ***The Monster Movie Fan's Guide to Japan*** by Armand Vaquer ($15). My buddy Armand is as knowledgeable about that country as he is about Godzilla and other Japanese *kaiju*. In this self-published guide, he gives you all the basic information you need for a Japanese trip and also takes you, figuratively speaking, to the locations of destruction and mayhem from *Godzilla, Mothra, Gamera: The Guardian of the Universe, King Kong Escapes*, and many other films. Side effects of reading this guide will almost certainly include a desperate longing to travel to Japan. Maybe someday.

For ordering information, email Vaquer at: *AMVaquer@aol.com.*

Black Images in the Comics: A Visual History by Fredrik Stromberg (Fantagraphics, $19.99) was released in hardcover in 2003 and will be released in a paperback edition this July. It's a thoughtful (often disturbing) examination of how blacks were portrayed in comics from the beginning of the 19th century to 2003, which is when the hardcover was published.

An editor of *Bild & Bubbla*, Scandinavia's oldest magazine about comics and Chairman of



the Swedish Comics Association, Stromberg has perceptions that are decidedly European. In one of my few quibbles with this book, he credits Swedish-produced *Phantom* comic books for the more positive and realistic treatment of blacks in the comic strip. (However, this change for the better was born in stories written by *Phantom* creator Lee Falk with the Swedes merely following his lead. Point to the very American Falk.)

Whatever my minor disagreements with Stromberg over his choices of images and comments thereon — Is it some sort of unwritten law that Will Eisner almost always gets a pass for how he portrayed Ebony in *The Spirit*? Eisner's claim that there was no other way he could've portrayed a black boy in the 1940s is disproved by the black kids who were fully equal partners in the *Our Gang* adventures written and drawn by Walt Kelly for Dell Comics — *Black Images* demands to be considered and studied seriously for insights of value to anyone writing or drawing comics today. I may have read a library copy of the hardcover, but I ordered the paperback to have the book close at hand in the future.

Black Images in the Comics is a must-have for serious students of the art form. I recommend it highly.

www.fantagraphics.com
ISBN 978-1-60699-562-4

Black Images demands to be considered and studied seriously for insights of value to anyone writing or drawing comics today.

TONY ISABELLA, comics writer and author, has been appearing in ***CBG*** since #3 in 1971. Comments on this column and review items for future columns can be sent to: Tony's Tips, 840 Damon Drive, Medina, OH 44256.
You can e-mail Tony at ***tonyisa@ohio.net***.

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NAVIGATING THE MAINSTREAM

PICKS AND PANS FROM DARK HORSE, DC, IDW, IMAGE, AND MARVEL

REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH COMIC BOOK

Tiny Titans #50

★★★★

DC

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writers: Art Baltazar, Franco
Artist: Baltazar

Last issue? Say it isn't so! For 50 issues, *Tiny Titans* has been the most clever, most creative, and wittiest comic book on the stands! Batcow? Lunch Lady Darkseid?

What little it lacks from being out of continuity, the series more than makes up for in every other way.

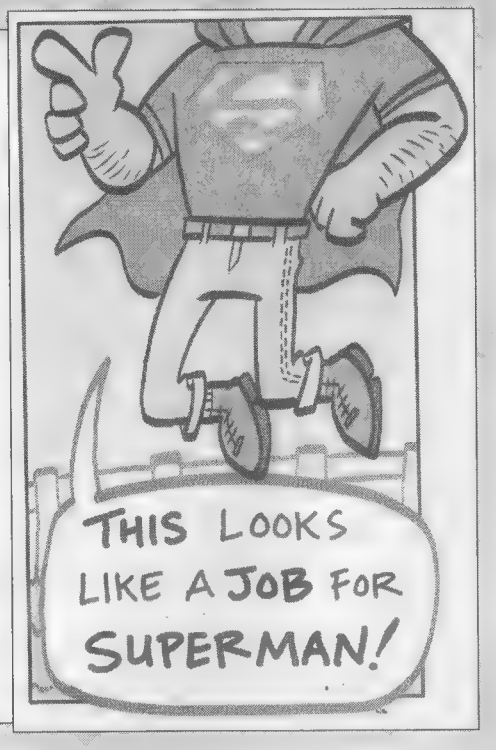
This issue ties up events nicely. The one-sided Beast Boy/Terra romance finally has a payoff. The Archie characters, whom The Tiny Titans met in a crossover series, are acknowledged. (Intercompany crossovers are rarely recognized in the main series.)

Superman appears — with his face finally on-panel! And the entire Superman family gets new costumes, reflecting their "New 52" looks. (The mysterious purple-hooded character was already revealed in *Tiny Titans* but it's probably not who it will be in "real" continuity.)

Tiny Titans is being replaced by *Superman Family Adventures*, a preview of which appears in this issue. The Titans' finale makes for a nice transition between the two series. On its own, it serves as a bittersweet farewell to a dear friend with whom we had hoped to visit longer.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.dccomics.com

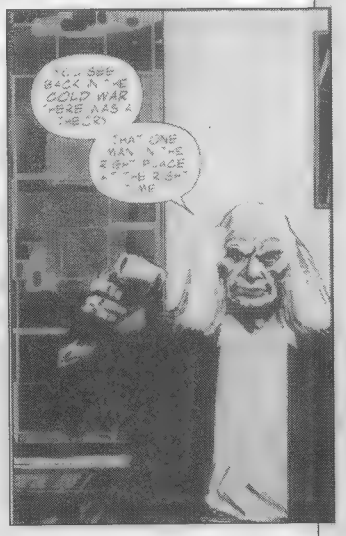


Winter Soldier #1-3

★★★

Marvel

$2.99 @, color, 32 pgs. @
Writer: Ed Brubaker
Artists: Butch Guice, Bettie Breitweiser



Ed Brubaker has successfully combined a smartly done spy thriller with the mainstream Marvel Universe. Such classic villains as Doctor Doom and The Red Ghost are mixed with Soviet scientists and Cold War assassins. In this first story arc, Bucky Barnes, aka "The Winter Soldier," tracks down three Soviet soldiers that were kept in suspended animation for several years until they found their way into a black-market auction. Their primary mission appears to be an assassination attempt on Doctor Doom. However, it quickly becomes clear that the auction buyer has a larger agenda in mind, one that could result in global repercussions.

Brubaker delivers plenty of action along with a great storyline, and the artistic team of Butch Guice and Bettie Breitweiser is nothing less than stunning. Marvel fans should also be happy to see The Black Widow with a starring role in this new series.

It was also an interesting turn of events to see a decision made by Nick Fury in the *Secret War* mini-series continue to have repercussions nearly eight years later.

— Christopher Galvan

www.marvel.com

Star Wars: Dawn of the Jedi — Force Storm #1-2

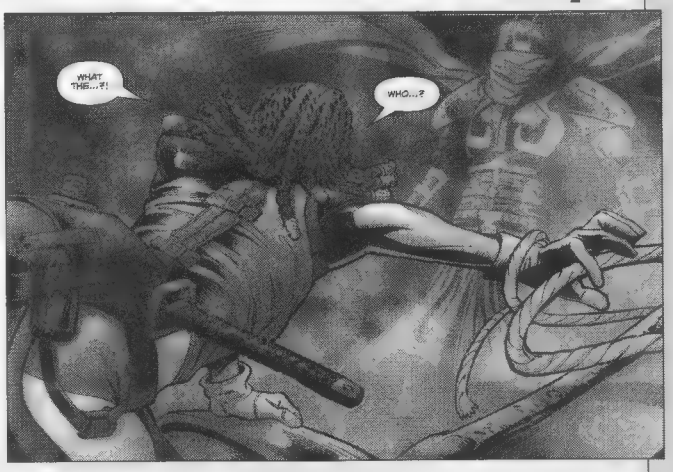
★★★½

Dark Horse

$3.50 @, color, 24 pgs. @

Writer: John Ostrander

Artists: Jan Duursema, Dan Parsons



After taking the *Star Wars* expanded universe more than a century into the future in *Star Wars: Legacy*, John Ostrander and Jan Duursema throw the time machine into full reverse and take readers on a journey dozens of millennia in the past, to an era barely mentioned, yet alone explored.

And what a journey it is! Using the same successful recipe as he did in *Legacy* (combining a familiar universe with an unfamiliar timeframe), Ostrander grabs readers immediately with a fascinating premise and keeps them with an engaging storyline and interesting characterization. In a time that long predates the Old Republic (and pretty much everything we know about this universe), Ostrander explores, not only the formation of the early Jedi order, but also an early threat.

Duursema and Parsons use their same strengths, as well: The straightforward layouts and smooth lines are easy on the eyes, and such touches as traditional swords in lieu of lightsabers quietly convey that this is not only a galaxy far, far away, but also a long, long time ago. Here's hoping that *Dawn of the Jedi* is around for a long time.

— Jim Johnson

www.darkhorse.com

John Byrne's Next Men #8

★★½

IDW

$3.99, color, 32 pgs.

Writer and artist: John Byrne

As is the case in the *Terminator* franchise, storylines in *John Byrne's Next Men* involve time travel and predestination paradoxes.

This issue is no exception. Gillian, a disembodied mind, travels from host body to host body. Eventually, "she" (if the female pronoun is appropriate *per* the story) wants to journey back into time with Nathan, Bethany, and Jasmine — three Next Men — to prevent Project: Next Men from happening. The cover has all the hosts Gillian possesses.

The art is good. Byrne's style has been criticized in recent years for looking rough. That's not the case here. (Nevertheless, it would be a treat to see Terry Austin — who inked Byrne's *X-Men* — embellish his pencils again.)

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.idwpublishing.com

Queen Crab

★★★

Image

$12.99, color, 68 pgs.

Writer: Jimmy Palmiotti

Artist: Artiz Eiguren

This comes close to a 3.5-star rating. The dark, fascinating story by Jimmy Palmiotti and Artiz Eiguren's excellent art make it a great book. The fairytale of a woman scorned — and then some — who awakens one day to find crab pincers have mysteriously replaced her human arms is an urban fantasy that pulls in the reader.

One of Palmiotti's strongest gifts is his ability to write a character who is too macabre and fantastic to be real, yet who comes off as the person next door. Odds are you've known people very similar to these characters, with all their foibles and charm (though without the crustacean appendages), and that makes for engaging reading.

Readers may balk at the price: The hardbound book is $13 for 50 pages of story, although the several pages of pinups and sketches are great. Also, while *I* loved the ending, there are readers who won't.

That said, *Queen Crab* is an incredible book well worth the investment.

— Ray Sidman

www.imagecomics.com

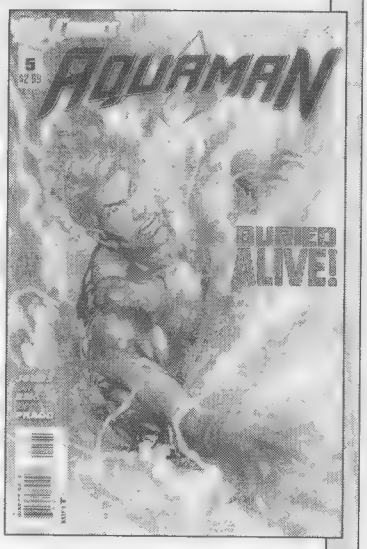
ISBN: 978-1607065050

Aquaman #5

★★★½

DC

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Geoff Johns
Artists: Ivan Reis, Joe Prado



Aquaman is a character who has been relaunched numerous times over the years — just like his aquatic counterpart, Namor, at Marvel. Some relaunches have worked, some have not. This one *works.*

Writer Geoff Johns pokes funs at all the jokes made about Aquaman throughout the decades and turns them on their ear. Readers can tell he's having a ball. The story begins with Aquaman stranded in the desert. It flashes back to how he got there (thrown out of an airship) and flashes forward to his current predicament.

Johns does cool, clever things with Atlantis and Atlantean technology. Aquaman, for example, finds an Atlantean device that's the equivalent to an airplane's black box but that is activated by being immersed in water.

Ivan Reis and Joe Prado do a stellar job on the art. Their artistry is clean and smooth with spectacular splash pages. When they draw seven to eight panels per page, the story feels neither rushed nor crowded. This is a *good* series.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

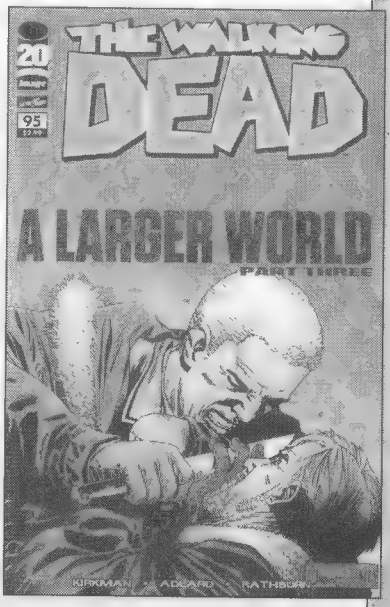
www.dccomics.com

Walking Dead #95

★★★½

Image

$2.99, b/w, 28 pgs.
Writer: Robert Kirkman
Artist: Charlie Adlard



See this issue's cover with Rick's fingers under the knife of a new antagonist, and you know that his latest venture into another community is destined for difficulty.

Rick has already stress-tested Jesus, the emissary from the Hilltop community. With his long history of tribulations, Rick has trouble trusting. So what will he do if he believes that everything he's been told is true and this *isn't* a trap? Or, more to the point, what will Rick do when there's trouble? He isn't known for using a soft touch.

As soon as everything looks simple, the story gets complicated and takes a nasty turn.

The Walking Dead continues to prove how well black-and-white comics can sell, with demand now at an all-time high, thanks to the ratings success of the TV series. This issue should satisfy readers both new and old, as this fresh branch in the story is a great jumping-on point.

— Michael Tierney

www.imagecomics.com

Avengers Origins: Vision #1

★½

Marvel

$3.99, color, 36 pgs.
Writers: Kyle Higgins, Alec Siegel
Artist: Stephane Perger

The Vision has been "dead" since 2004's "Avengers: Disassembled." So it's good to see him (not Vision 2.0 of *Young Avengers*) back — even for an origin story. It's too bad that the writers didn't get the origin right.

When The Vision first battled Wasp and Goliath in 1968's *Avengers* #57 — Black Panther and Hawkeye weren't there. The Pyms didn't defeat him; instead, he fell over.

Here, all four Avengers battle and defeat him.

There's no mention of his connections to Wonder Man and the original Human Torch.

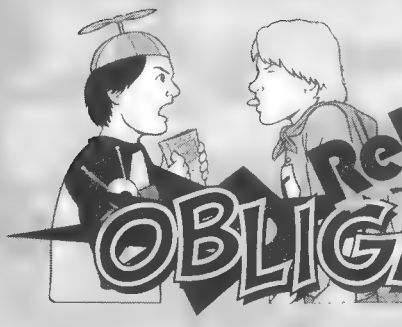
He doesn't spar with Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man.

There's no tribute to the iconic image of his shedding a tear. These are essentials in making him a beloved character.

The art is fine in some parts, bad in others. For instance, The Vision-Goliath-Wasp battle has no backgrounds. Some of the dialogue from Vision's debut is expository, alliterative, goes clunk in places, and has to be modernized. That's fine. How he is named is changed — also fine. But the project has so many other problems that readers will probably be better served by spending their money elsewhere.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.marvel.com



Retro OBLIGATORY FIGHT SCENE!

Our reviewers didn't always agree even way back when!

Avengers #1 vs. *X-Men* #1

Marvel

12¢ @, color, 32 pgs. @

Writer: Stan Lee; Artists: Jack Kirby, Dick Ayers, Paul Reinman

Reviewed by Jim "Jarvis" Johnson and John "Juggernaut" Petty

Jim Johnson: Hey, Johnny! I've just found the coolest comic ever made. It's got all of Marvel's most popular super-heroes — well, except Spider-Man — and they all form their own super-team! It's just like that *Justice League* comic! Only it's better, because Marvel is awesome! Loki sets up The Hulk to get Thor to fight him, only Iron Man, Ant-Man, and The Wasp show up, too! And then they *all* team up to defeat Loki! There was a first issue for some comic called *The X-Men* on the rack, too, but I never heard of any of the characters on the team, and they all wear the same boring uniform. You can be sure *that* comic will be a colossal flop. *The Avengers* rule!

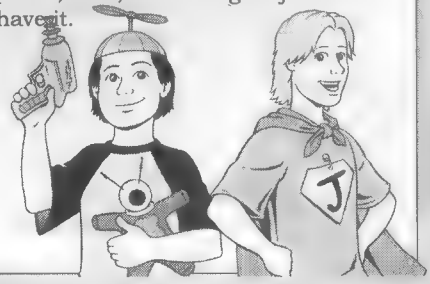
John Petty: You big dummy. What's so great about these Avengers bozos? It's just a bunch of boring old guys from other books. So what? At least, The X-Men are new and exciting and they're not like other stupid heroes who get their powers from being bitten by a bug or finding an old stick in a cave. The X-Men are mutants — that means they were born with their powers, you team-up twit — and *they're* awesome. Cyclops can shoot beams out of his eyes, which is cooler than anything your dumb Avengers can do, and Marvel Girl is much better than any dumb Wasp. Besides, how long can any team with The Hulk on it last? They oughta just put him in a rocket and shoot him into space and get rid of him. Now that would be cool, but Marvel won't ever do anything like that. *(**Editor's note:** Johnny obviously didn't see **Incredible Hulk** #3 when it was on the stands about a year earlier.)*

Johnson: They oughta shoot *you* into space, you big dope, but no one's ever gonna do that, either. The Avengers are like the All-Star Game in baseball: You get all of the best together in one place. The X-Men are like some Minor League team that no one cares about. So they've got a guy who can fly. And a guy who can hop around. Big deal. They need some *new* mutants, because if there were ever an Avengers vs. X-Men battle, your guys wouldn't have a hope, because only The Avengers have someone who can control the weather or has metal armor. You watch: By the time we're old there will be no more mutants.

Petty: Aw, yer mother eats gamma rays, ya jade-jawed jerk. Look, it's simple: The only way The Avengers would be good is if they had a couple of mutants on their team. Take away Thor's hammer and what've you got? A lame-o with a medical degree. Take away Iron Man's armor and what've you got? Bruce Wayne without the Batcave. Step on Ant-Man and The Wasp and what've you got? Goo all over your shoes. Big whoop. But you can't take away The X-Men's powers, 'cause they're super all the time, which makes them 10 times cooler than your Avengers who can be disassembled like rotten old Tinkertoys. Someday, *all* Marvel's heroes are gonna be mutants, you'll see, 'cause you just can't have too many mutant super-heroes.

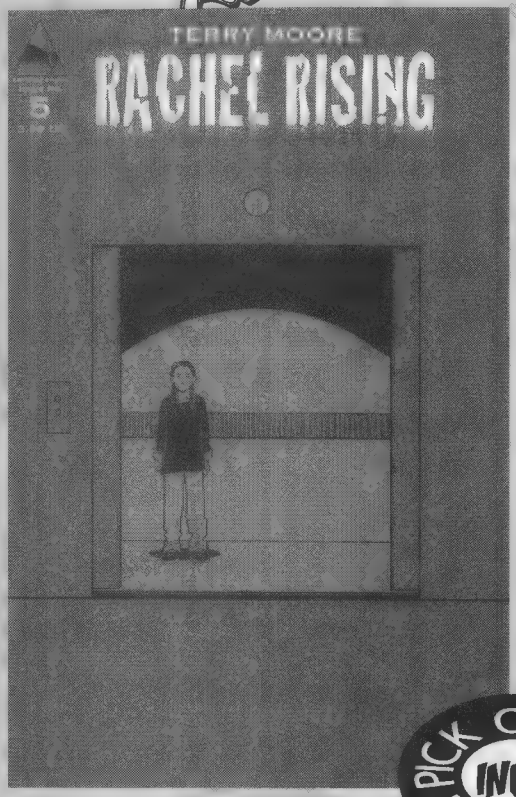
Johnson: Yeah, what cool powers these mutants have. What's next? Some guy who can scream really loud? Or a guy who's so fat he can't be moved? That's just cuckoo. And the day The Avengers let mutants join is the day I'll let girls into my treehouse. It ain't gonna happen.

Petty: The only girl who might ever wanna be in your treehouse is a girl squirrel, and then only because you're nuts. That's about as dumb as thinking that The Thing would ever join such a stupid team. I'm crossing it off my list, 'cuz when it comes to power, man, The Avengers just don't have it.



Tour of the INDIES

INDEPENDENT AND SMALL PRESS REVIEWS



PICK OF THE MONTH INDIE

Voltron #1-3

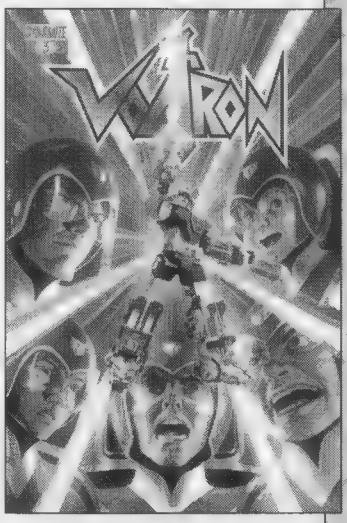
★½

Dynamite Entertainment

$3.99 @, color, 32 pgs. @

Writer: Brandon Thomas

Artists: Ariel Padilla, Alex Ross



Dynamite Entertainment now has the rights (the previous license-holder was Devil's Due) to publish comics based on *Voltron*, the 1980s cartoon property about five heroes piloting five robot lions that merge into a giant robot.

The story is convoluted. It starts in the middle of The Drule Empire raiding Earth; The Voltron Force — Keith, Princess Allura, Lance, Pidge, and Hunk — are trying to save the day. At the same time, Voltron is battling RoBeasts (giant monsters). How can this be with the five performing a boots-on-the-ground mission? Turns out there's a sixth pilot — and it's not Sven (the hero Allura replaced on the cartoon). Sven's nowhere to be found and isn't mentioned.

King Zarkon, the main bad guy, has ties to Earth, particularly a scientist. No more can be explained without giving it away, but it doesn't work. Moreover, the characters (especially The Voltron Force) aren't fleshed out the way they were in the Devil's Due version. They're like their cartoon counterparts, only they cuss a bit.

You're better off buying Devil's Due's *Voltron Omnibus*.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.dynamite.net

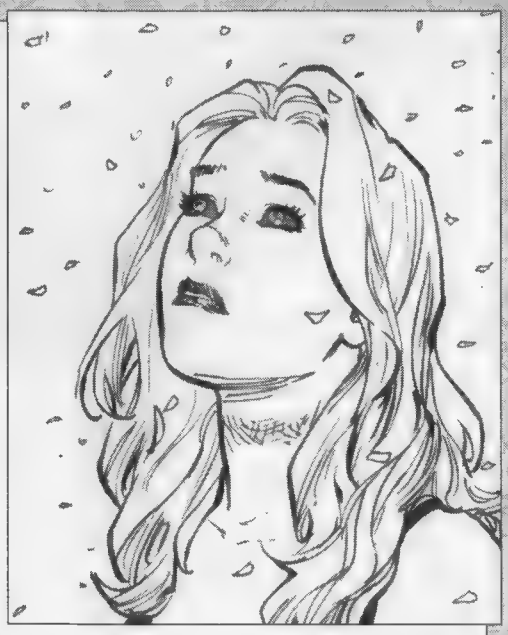
Rachel Rising #5-6

★★★★

Abstract Studios

$3.99 @, b/w, 24 pgs. @

Writer and artist: Terry Moore



Rachel is dead. Or is she? Terry Moore's latest series hits its stride, as the comely heroine tries to figure out the answer. She gets help from her aunt Johnny (who works in the local morgue) and the local doctor (who recognizes Rachel as the Angel of Death). The actual Angel of Death shows up again in the form of Rachel's doppelgänger, just as Rachel finds the runaway Zoe, who has also been possessed. And then there's the catastrophic car accident that once again proves that something weird is going on here.

Not that that should come as a surprise. The deeper this story goes, the more levels pile up. What appeared to be a serial-killer story is now something more — something of more breadth and scope. Both Moore's storytelling and art skills are on full display here, with his trademark realistic characters dealing with situations that are disturbing (he includes a bit about a nasty foster dad) and unreal. Even the mild-mannered doctor has a bizarre secret that feeds into — or perhaps off of — the main story. *Rachel Rising* is among the cream of independent comics being published today.

— Timothy J. Wood

www.terrymooreart.com

Grimm Fairy Tales Presents: Alice in Wonderland #1-3

★★★

Zenescope

$2.99 @, color, 32 pgs. @

Writers: Raven Gregory, Ralph Tedesco, Joe Brusha

Artists: Robert Gill, Jason Embury

Zenescope finally does its version of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.*

Granted, it has done series based on Carroll's tale in the past — but those stories focused on Alice after her sojourn to Wonderland (she's suicidal, traumatized by what she saw there), Alice's daughter Calie, villains, and the realm of Wonderland itself. In this series, Zenescope adapts and interspersés Carroll's original novel with its own *Wonderland* continuity.

The writers — Raven Gregory, Ralph Tedesco, and Joe Brusha — follow the chapters of Carroll's original novel, although some of their takes are full of blood and guts. The creative team also adds scenes. Winning the award for creepiest villain is the demented Mad Hatter.

His atrocities are too many to name here, not to mention unfit for print, but to give you an idea: Let's just say The Joker has nothing on this sick dude; he'd kneel in reverence, as a matter of fact.

This is a chilling twist on an old favorite.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.zenescope.com

Richie Rich Gems #44

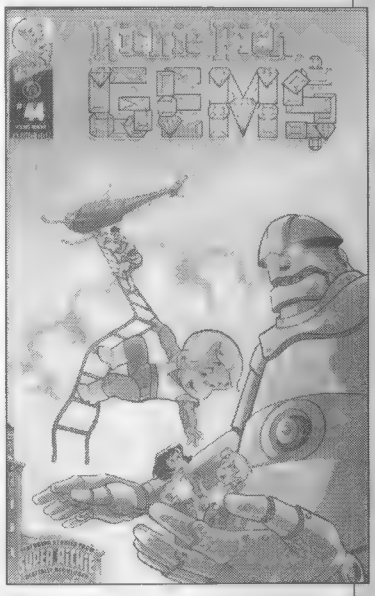
★★★

Ape Entertainment

$3.99, color, 28 pgs.

Writers: Sid Jacobson, *et al.*

Artists: Ernie Colon, *et al.*



Ape Entertainment brought back *Richie Rich* in 2011 with a new look and direction for the character. It focused more on stories about helping victims of greed and corruption, rather than Richie's endless supply of wealth. However, it's nice to see that the publisher is also trying to bring back fans of the "old school" Richie, as well. *Richie Rich Gems* returns with its original numbering, along with recolored stories from decades past.

Besides the reprinted material, there is also a new story by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon. "The Kidnapping of Mr. Rich" features Richie and his faithful butler Cadbury in their alternate identities as Rippy and Crashman. Although it's an original tale, it could easily pass as a story released 30 years ago, thanks to Colon's classic art style.

Ape Entertainment gets extra credit for disclosing the reprints on the cover, so that readers know exactly what they're getting for their money. Also included are some great single-page gags that add to the laughs.

— Christopher Galvan

www.kizoic.com

Spera

★★★½

Archaia

$19.95, color, 176 pgs.

Writer: Josh Tierney; Artists: Kyla Vanderklugt, Hwei, Emily Carroll; Olivier Pichard

The youthful spirit of fantasy and adventure is alive and well within the pages of *Spera.* Writer Josh Tierney has woven a fun tale that appeals to all ages. With the help of a quartet of artists, the story of Princess Lono, Princess Pira, and Yonder is made vibrant and engaging, as they journey to find the magical realm of Spera to save their own kingdoms.

Any time a title has rotating artists, it's interesting to see the range of interpretations of the writer's material. Such is the case with *Spera,* and even kids can appreciate the individual artists' work. While some readers may not be fond of the notably different presentations of the characters — especially that of the magic-powered Yonder — even children should be able to follow the progress of events with little or no confusion.

It's not only well worth reading, it'd be an excellent choice for local libraries to add to their shelves.

— Ray Sidman

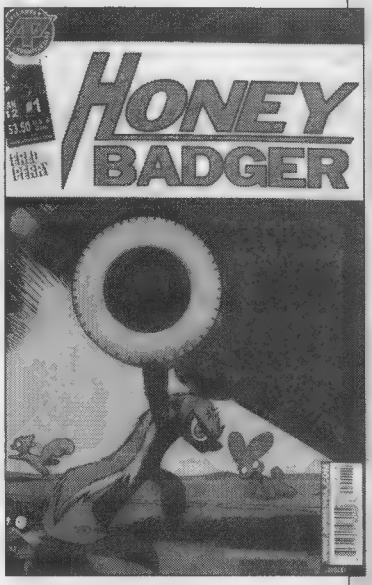
www.archaia.com

ISBN: 978-1936393305

Honey Badger #1

★

Antarctic Press
$3.50, b/w, 24 pgs.
Writer and artist: Fred Perry



Confession: When I ordered this, I didn't read the description carefully. "What a great title for a kick-ass martial-arts-babe comic," I thought when I saw the title. Note to self: Never order on title alone.

Apparently I was on pop-culture hiatus when the whole honey badger thing hit. So it was that I'd had no idea that goofy narration over some *National Geographic* footage of a honey badger in various predicaments had racked up millions of hits. The comic adapts both the narration and some of the situations from the video, pitting the feisty honey badger (also known as a ratel) against a bear, wolves, a cobra, and other critters.

While the flip covers — parodies of *Action* #1 and ninjas — and the art are good, riffing on the original patter (or copying it in some instances) isn't enough to sustain a 24-page comic book. It's tiresome. We get it, already. The honey badger is nature's bad dude. One or two pages would have been sufficient. Honey badger don't care — and neither do we.

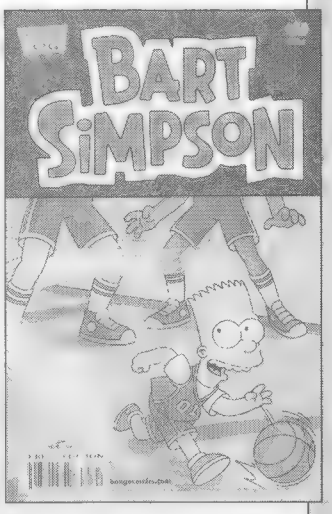
— Timothy J. Wood

www.apmanga.com

Bart Simpson #69

★★★

Bongo
$2.99, color, 28 pgs.
Writers and artists: Various



The Simpsons cartoon series has been on the air since 1989, and various comic books based on the semi-functional family have been published since 1993 (in addition to the *Simpsons Illustrated* magazine, which came out in 1991). So you'd think the creators would run out of ideas at some point, right?

Wrong!

"Hoop Schemes," the lead story in *Bart Simpson* #69, posits a fun and clever premise: Mr. Burns buys a women's professional basketball team and moves it to Springfield. The story taps into Lisa's feminist nature, Homer's sexism (not to mention his gluttonous tendencies), and Mr. Burns' evilness (which borders on mad-scientist-like behavior here).

The second half of this double feature is an agreeable yarn called "... Bart Simpson Shall Do My Bidding," which finds Sideshow Bob in prison, controlling Bart Simpson (who eats his own shorts) over the phone with a Pied Piper-like flute.

The intermission is a ho-hum two-pager by the usually reliable (and often great) Sergio Aragonés, best known for *Groo the Wanderer* and various *Mad* magazine cartoons.

— Brett Weiss

www.bongocomics.com

The Secret History of D.B. Cooper #1

★★½

Oni Press
$3.99, color, 28 pgs.
Writer and artist: Brian Churilla

You know why you go through security at the airport? Not because of terrorists; it's because of D.B. Cooper. In 1971, D.B. Cooper (an alias) hijacked a plane and parachuted to "freedom" with $200,000 (then a lot of money). Apparently, comics fans have spent 40 years demanding a D.B. Cooper comic book — and here it is!

Cooper, Churilla informs us, was some kind of secret agent. Not the James Bond kind: more the psychic-landscape, one-eared-teddy-bear-spirit-guide kind. There's a whole lot of "What's going on here?" followed by a heaping helping of "What just went on there?" Presumably, things will be cleared up in subsequent issues, but this reviewer suspects that things are going to get a lot weirder first.

The art is pretty enough, the story has a *Men in Black* vibe to it, and the Cooper angle is an interesting hook — even if it's from left field (or perhaps because of it). Overall, the series is too soon to call, but the first issue certainly piques the curiosity enough to give the next issue a try.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.onipress.com

The Cast of Doctor Who

★★½

Bluewater

$3.99, color, 28 pgs.
Writer: Paul J. Salamoff
Artist: Jamie Martinez Rodriguez

Or, as the indicia has it, *Fame: The Cast of Dr. Who* (sic).

Bluewater has certainly tapped the unauthorized biography field, with comics featuring everything from politicians to comics creators. Here, it tackles science-fiction fan-favorite *Doctor Who* with biographies of four of the 11 actors (12, if you count Peter Cushing in the film continuity) who portrayed The Doctor.

Instead of going at the rate of one Doctor per issue — or even going in order of their appearance — Bluewater has provided readers with a nice potpourri. Readers are treated to bios of William Hartnell (the first Doctor), Matt Smith (the current Doctor), Tom Baker (a long-running Doctor and perhaps the best-recognized in the States), and Paul McGann (the most mysterious Doctor with the least screen time, having only appeared in the *Doctor Who* television movie.) Likenesses, often hit-or-miss in such endeavors, do not disappoint.

Diehard Whovians might be gratified to learn of these actors' careers before and after the role that made them most famous. Here's hoping, not only for more Doctors, but for some of the more popular companions, as well.

— Jack Abramowitz

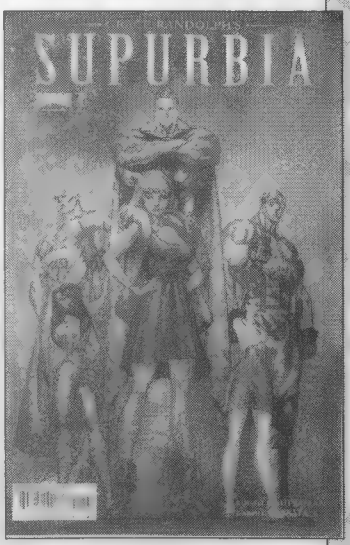
www.bluewaterprod.com

Supurbia #1

★★½

Boom!

$3.99, color, 24 pgs.
Writer: Grace Randolph
Artist: Russell Dauterman



Well, what have we here? *The Real Housewives of Gotham City*, perhaps? Take one of those series where comics archetypes have all-too-human flaws and foibles. Populate it with the usual icons: a demigod-like perfect hero, a creature of the night, a warrior woman, an all-American patriot, *etc.* Now give them spouses. This is their story.

As is the case with any good reality show — and quite a few bad ones — there's no shortage of drama. Night Fox's wife is not pleased about his relationship with his kid sidekick. Batu, the aforementioned warrior woman, is a far cry from mother of the year. Sovereign uses his enhanced senses to spy on the others. It ought not surprise readers that one of the players is secretly a fox in the henhouse — which is saying something, when the heroes are already largely wolves in sheep's clothing.

The art often borders on ethereal, perhaps a little too dreamy at times for a "reality" series but lovely, nonetheless. Gabriel Cassata's coloring really enhances the art. It's just one more reason *Supurbia* is worth a look.

— Jack Abramowitz

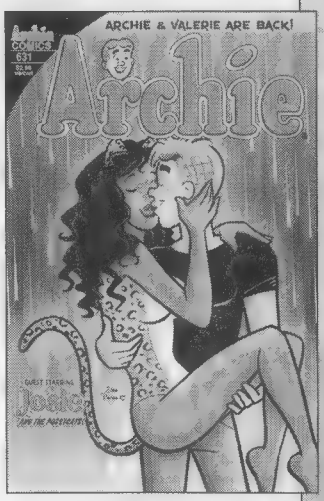
www.boom-studios.com

Archie #631

★★★

Archie

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Dan Parent
Artists: Parent, Rich Koslowski



There have been a lot of enjoyable Archie stories of late, although some of them have been on the gimmicky side, such as the just-concluded "Archie Meets Kiss" and "Riverdale Comic-Con" stories.

But it's good to see that gimmicks aren't needed to tell a fun story, as witnessed by this issue, which features, not only Josie & The Pussycats making an appearance in Riverdale, but also the revelation that Pussycat band member Valerie is moving to Riverdale — much to Archie's delight and Betty and Veronica's chagrin.

As Archie starts dating Valerie, Betty takes a liking to Valerie's brother, leaving Veronica without a boyfriend *or* best friend. In other words, it's fairly typical Archie-style high jinks.

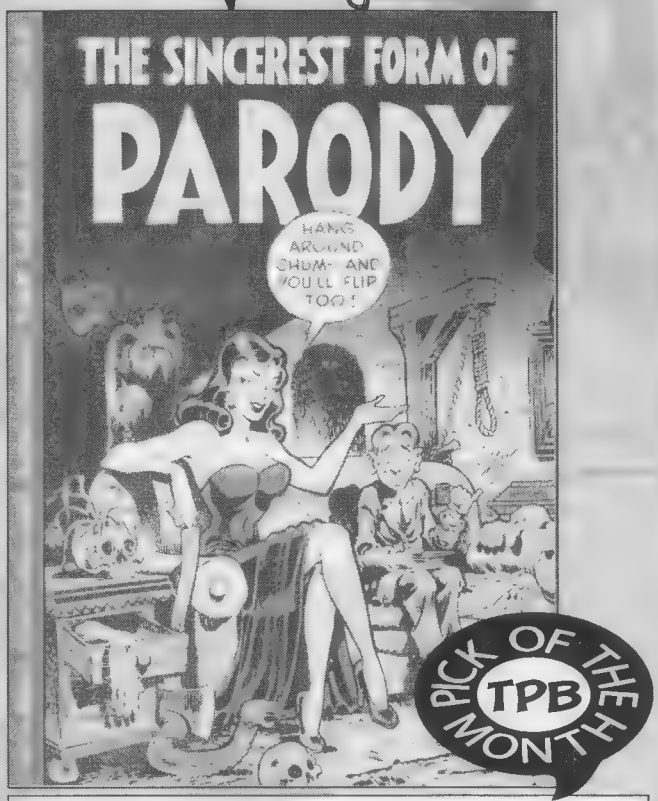
Dan Parent "gets" the innocent and simple world of Archie, both in coming up with this sort of storyline as well as illustrating it. Those who haven't read *Archie* in a while might think that there are simply no more Archie stories to tell — or that they would be of no interest to a modern audience — but Parent proves this just isn't so with every issue he creates. Archie Comics are as much fun as ever.

— Jim Johnson

www.archiecomics.com

BOUND For Glory

TRADE PAPERBACK AND GRAPHIC NOVEL REVIEWS



The Sincerest Form of Parody ★★★★

Fantagraphics

$24.99, color, 192 pgs.

Writers and artists: Various

During *Mad*'s heyday, newsstands were flooded with imitators. These included such also-rans as *Whack*, *Nuts*, *Flip*, *Get Lost*, and *Eh!* Editor John Benson has collected a variety of tales from the '50s, most of which will be new to the average reader.

Classic *Mad* stories have been reprinted in umpteen formats, from black-and-white paperbacks to computer discs. Those of us who have repeatedly enjoyed "Melvin of the Apes" and "Superduperman" will find new laughs from *Mad*'s illegitimate offspring. The sources being parodied may be dated, but such tales as "The Shriek of Araby" and "The Crisco Keed" still provide chuckles.

You'll also find many familiar names among the creators of these gems. Jack Kirby, Joe Simon, Al Hartley, Dan DeCarlo, and Bill Everett are among the talents on board, as are such prominent *Mad*-men as Al Feldstein, Jack Davis, and Bill Elder.

There's also an informative appendix by Benson. It's icing on the cake.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.fantagraphics.com

ISBN 978-1-60699-511-2

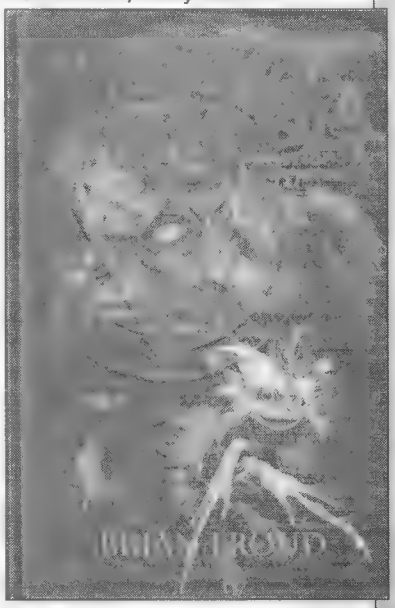
The Dark Crystal Vol. 1: Creation Myths ★★★

Archaia

$19.95, color, 96 pgs.

Writer: Brian Holguin

Artists: Brian Froud, Alex Sheikman, Lizzy John



Growing up, I was never a huge *Dark Crystal* fan. I recall seeing it in the theater and have always been more than a little enamored with it, though, so I joined the legions of fans who went gaga at word of a new trilogy of comics courtesy of Archaia, as well as a new movie currently being shopped around Hollywood.

Enter the first in the new book trilogy, *Creation Myths*. At the helm is original *Dark Crystal* concept artist and fantasy illustrator, Brian Froud. It's a joy to see the characters brought to life again, joined by new creatures and characters. The history of Aughra, in particular, is well written and beautifully rendered.

While the stories collected here aren't all equally intriguing, there's not a weak entry among them. Moreover, as the book is designed to continue in the second volume, I expect the interest in this one will be increased as future volumes are released. Also, it's interesting that the rating on this book is "Teen +13," while the original movie was aimed at a younger audience.

Whether or not another *Dark Crystal* movie ever sees daylight, this volume heralds much promise and adds wonderfully to the legacy of Jim Henson's original movie.

— Ray Sidman

www.archaia.com

ISBN: 978-1936393008

Stickman Odyssey, Book One: An Epic Doodle ★★★

Philomel
$12.99, b/w, 208 pgs.
Writer and artist: Christopher Ford

Greek epics are full of tragedy, comedy, and ... stick figures? Why, yes, indeed they are in *Stickman Odyssey*, which recounts the adventures of Zozimos of Sticatha. He leaves his childhood home and mentor to test his warrior skills by fighting monsters, battling kings, and fending off the attractions of a princess. Zosimos gathers a group of oddball characters like himself, and they travel through the world searching for quests.

Christopher Ford parallels Zozimos' story to those of Greek heroes Odysseus and Theseus, with a few others mixed in, albeit more goofy than theirs. He's also not so much favored by the gods as he is a favorite plaything. Ford's ideas work well to inspire laughter and encourage a greater appreciation for the original myths. His stick figures have more meat on their lines and are fun to watch, as they run across the page avoiding doom.

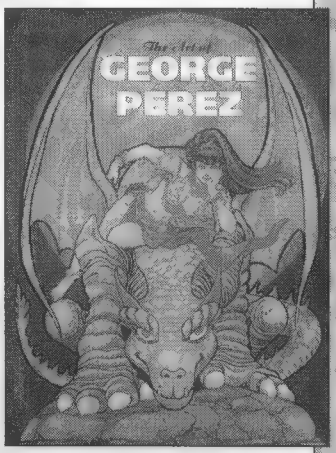
Younger readers might find it lengthy, but the older set will keep the turning the pages to find out what happens next.

— Whitney Grace

http://us.penguingroup.com/static/pages/publishers/yr/philomel.html
ISBN: 978-0399254260

The Art of George Pérez ★★★½

IDW
$49.99, color, 256 pgs.
Writer and artist: George Pérez



This oversize hardcover coffee-table book chronicles the career of George Pérez, easily one of the most popular and influential artists in comics. Jim Starlin, who collaborated with Pérez on *The Infinity Gauntlet*, provides the introduction. Starlin says he really doesn't know Pérez but his work speaks volumes.

It opens with Pérez' beginnings in the 1970s as the assistant for Rich Buckler. Soon thereafter, Pérez' star began to rise, as he made his mark on *Fantastic Four*, *The Inhumans*, and a run on *The Avengers*. He cemented his place as a renowned creator in the 1980s with *The New Teen Titans* and *Crisis on Infinite Earths* — both co-written by longtime collaborator Marv Wolfman.

The book covers Pérez' second run on *The Avengers*, his creator-owned *Crimson Plague*, and a 2003-2004 *JLA/Avengers* mini-series, as well as commissions and theater posters. While it would have been an added treat, if Pérez had been able to reveal more about an aborted 1980s *JLA/Avengers* mini-series from the 1980s, with the *JLA/Avengers* that *did* achieve publication, Pérez said Kurt Busiek gave him a script worth waiting 20 years to draw.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.idwpublishing.com
ISBN: 978-1600108594

'68 Vol. 1: Better Run through the Jungle ★★★

Image
$19.99, color,178 pgs.
Writer: Mark Kidwell; Artist: Nat Jones

There's no shortage of zombie-mashup comics out there; plenty of creators have crossed the undead with everything from ancient Camelot to the works of Charles Dickens. Some projects are actually pretty good, but most deserve a quick shot through the head.

Count Mark Kidwell and Nat Jones' *'68* is among the better ones. The walking-dead plague is brought into the era of the Vietnam War, both on the front lines as well as the home front. At first, Kidwell's story comes across as little more than a cookie-cutter Vietnam story, complete with the usual Victor-Charlie-four-clicks-out type of jargon. However, in due time, he builds up a chilling, suspenseful, and horrifically fun tale, as the plague spreads into the camps of both sides.

Jones is among the best at rendering dangling eyeballs and trailing intestines, but he also knows how to lay out the story dynamically during peaceful interludes. Both Kidwell and Jones know that a story like this can't be high art, so they embrace its sensational nature and make it into something enjoyable. Better run to the comics shop.

— Jim Johnson

www.imagecomics.com
ISBN 978-1-60706-516-6

Young Marvelman Classic Vol. 2 ★

Marvel

$34.99, b/w, 216 pgs.

Writers: Mick Anglo, Leo Rawlings

Artists: George Parlett, James Bleach, Frank Daniels

The novelty has worn off, and the flaws are showing. After several volumes of *Marvelman* and *Young Marvelman*, the "Wow, I've always wondered" factor is gone, leaving readers with "Wow, this art is really bad" and "Wow, these stories are pretty dull."

It has relative high points — Frank Daniels' art is generally pretty engaging — but they're only *relative* high points. There's no Young Nastyman in this volume and no Young Gargunza. What is here are two tales of Young Marvelman fighting invisible robbers, originally published three weeks apart.

Most noteworthy in this volume is the first recorded meeting of Marvelman and Young Marvelman. It's a five page-story, the characters are unsurprised to see each other (though it was new to readers), the threat is never explained, and the senior partner steals the limelight even though it's junior's book! In modern terms: epic fail.

Even the paper is disappointing, making the book feel more like a hardcover *Essential* than a *Masterworks* or *Premiere Hardcover*. We do get to see Hitler attempting to invade Earth from Hell. That's got to count for *something*.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.marvel.com

ISBN 978-0-7851-5826-4

The Joker ★★★

Rizzoli International Publications

$50, color, 209 pgs.

Writer: Daniel Wallace

Artists: Bob Kane, Jim Lee, *et al.*

Daniel Wallace presents a visual history of The Clown Prince of Crime, tracing his roots from his first appearance in 1940's *Batman* #1 (co-created by Bob Kane and Jerry Robinson) to his days as an eccentric prankster to his present and, arguably, most popular incarnation as a sadistic psychopathic killer with a demented sense of humor.

Kane said his inspiration for The Joker had come from Conrad Veidt in 1928's *The Man Who Laughs*, which is mentioned. Excerpts from the Batman character's first appearance are included, and it's interesting to note that Batman referred to him as "Mr. Joker." He was the first villain in comics to receive his own monthly series in the 1970s. Two of the turning points in The Joker's history were (Do we *need* to provide a **Spoiler Warning** here?) crippling Barbara Gordon and murdering Jason Todd in the late 1980s.

The Joker's big- and small-screen incarnations are also covered, including performances by Cesar Romero, Mark Hamill (who writes the introduction), Jack Nicholson, and Heath Ledger.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.rizzoliusa.com

ISBN: 978-0789322647

The Many Adventures of Miranda Mercury Vol. 1: Time Runs Out ★★★

Archaia

$24.99, color, 178 pgs.

Writer: Brandon Thompson; Artist: Lee Ferguson

The Many Adventures of Miranda Mercury chronicles the adventures of 13-year-old Miranda. Set in the future, it beautifully meshes a coming-of-age story with a bread-and-butter super-hero story.

Miranda was forced to stand on the sidelines while her family saved the universe.

Then came the day when it was her turn to get off the bench and step up to the plate. And, as if the stakes couldn't get any higher, Miranda only has a year to live due to the machinations of her enemy Cyrus Vega. Rather than wallow in self-pity, she and her partner, Jack Warning, set out to save as many lives as possible. One cool twist of an ending defies all expectations.

Avengers: The Origin writer Joe Casey provides a glowing introduction. Co-creator and writer Brandon Thompson provides an insightful afterword, stating that this book is about overcoming great obstacles. In an ironic twist of fate, Thompson had to overcome great obstacles to get this book published.

The Many Adventures of Miranda Mercury is exciting, poignant, touching, and fun — which is how comics should be.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *The Many Adventures of Miranda Mercury* #295-300, #124, #1

www.archaia.com; ISBN: 978-1936393053

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Review copies: P.O. Box 6, Iola, WI 54945

MICHAEL TIERNEY
Michael is a comics retailer with two stores in Little Rock, Ark.
Contact Michael at ***cbsrock@swbell.net***

BRETT WEISS
A former comics retailer, Brett is the author of *Filtered Future, The Land of Oz and Other Dark Tales of Science Fiction and Horror* (2012, Amazon Kindle).
Review copies: 4905 Tulip Lane, Fort Worth, TX 76137

TIMOTHY J. WOOD
Timothy is a writer and journalist who lives on Cape Cod, Mass.
Review copies to: 8 Nonatum Ln., Chatham, MA 02633

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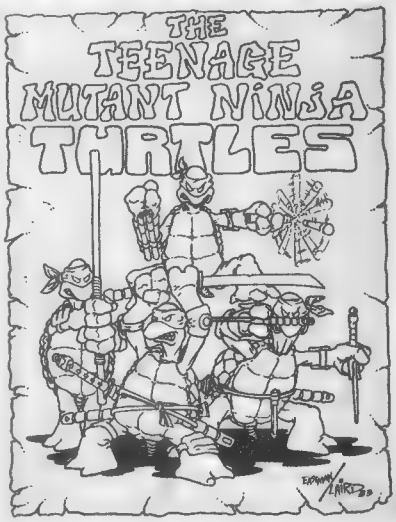
(510) 575-4076

Early art offered

Another first from Eastman & Laird leads Heritage sale

by **BRENT FRANKENHOFF**



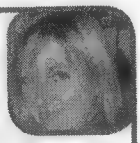
A sketch created in jest that launched one of the most successful character franchises in history is among more than 1,300 lots in Heritage Comic Auctions' Signature Sale May 10 and 11.

In late 1983, Kevin Eastman sketched a ninja turtle as a joke for his studiomate and friend Peter Laird. "I threw it onto Peter's desk. He laughed — and did a version of his own, to which I needed to take it one step further and did a pencil sketch of four different Turtles, each holding a different weapon. I gave it to Peter, who wanted to ink it in. When he did, he added 'Teenage Mutant' to the 'Ninja Turtle' part of the logo and we both fell off our chairs!" Eastman has consigned the sketch, which has a pre-auction estimate of more than $50,000, to the two-day event, to be held at Heritage's Dallas headquarters.

This isn't the first piece of Turtles history to be sold by Heritage. In addition to early issues of the comics, the firm has sold a total of three copies of Eastman and Laird's *Gobbledygook* #1 ($1,912-$11,352.50, depending on copy variables), which predates the Turtles and contains the first advertising for the later series.

Comics from the Billy Wright Collection are also among the top items offered in the sale. In Heritage's February Signature Auction, the first offerings from this original-owner collection, accumulated during the earliest days of the Golden Age, realized more than $3.5 million.

ATOMIC AVENUE ANALYSIS

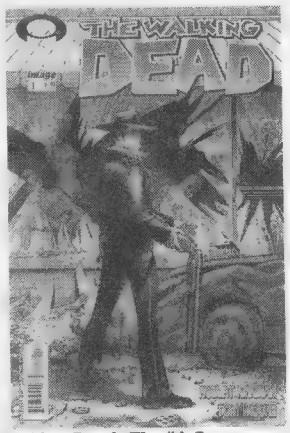


Carolyn Bickford,
ComicBase/Atomic Avenue

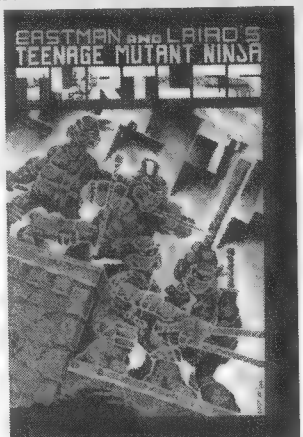
As the AMC TV series comes to a close, *The Walking Dead* is gaining strength among collectors. The second printing of *The Walking Dead* #1 (Oct 03) shot to $10 this month, almost quintupling its March value. *The Walking Dead Weekly* #27 (Jul 11) jumped to $10.50 from $2.50. Sales for both series are strong. *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* may be seeing one of their periodic revivals, as #1 (1984) soared to $1,275 in Near Mint, up from $850 in March.

Ten-year-old backstock is heading into $1 and 25¢ bins. Formerly a hot incentive included with *Wizard* #111, *Darkchylde Redemption* #0.5/A (Apr 01) lost half its value last month. *Young Justice* #24 (Oct 00) similarly dropped several times, ending at 75¢.

*— **Carolyn Bickford** is the administrator for **Atomic Avenue (www.atomicavenue.com)**, where you can find the comics you're looking for. She lives in San Jose, Calif., with her husband, **ComicBase** creator Peter Bickford, her two lovely children, and a whole lot of comic books. **CBG** maintains a strategic alliance with ComicBase.*



***Walking Dead, The* #1-2**
March's NM price: $1.75
April's NM price: $10



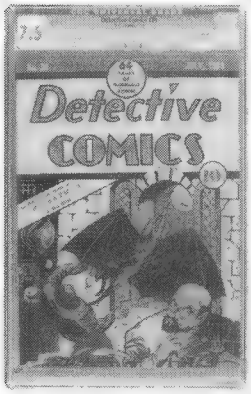
***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #1**
March's NM price: $850
April's NM price: $1,275

***Darkchylde Redemption* #0.5/A**
March's NM price: $5
April's NM price: $2.50

***Young Justice* #24**
March's NM price: $2.50
April's NM price: 75¢

What is CGC?

CGC is the abbreviation for Certified Guaranty Company, an independent grading firm that evaluates comics, gives them a condition grade based on strict criteria and a 10-point scale, and then encapsulates the comic book in a hard plastic holder with the grade prominently displayed. This independent grading levels the playing field for buyers and sellers by establishing a grade that both can agree on and trust. More information is available at *www.cgccomics.com*.



The May sale includes such titles from Wright's collection as:

• *Detective Comics* #29, CGC-graded 7.5 (Very Fine-)

• *Action Comics* #2, CGC-graded 5.0 (Very Good/Fine)

• *Adventure Comics* #40, CGC-graded 8.0 (Very Fine)

Other comics in the May auction include:

• The Twin Cities pedigree copy of *Amazing Spider-Man* #1, CGC-graded 9.4 (Near Mint)

• *X-Men* #1, CGC-graded 9.0 (Very Fine/Near Mint)

• *Avengers* #4, CGC-graded 9.6 (Near Mint+)

Original art collectors aren't overlooked in this sale either with such offerings as:

• Page 3 from *Fantastic Four* #55 by Jack Kirby and Joe Sinnott, featuring a half-page panel of The Silver Surfer in flight

• Joe Kubert's cover for *The Brave and the Bold* #34, the first appearance of the Silver Age Hawkman and Hawkwoman

• Robert Crumb's original cover for *Zap Comics* #8, with color separations and a handwritten letter

Online bidding for the sale is already underway and live sessions commence May 10. For more information and to see the other lots in the sale, visit *http://comics.ha.com*.

CBG TRENDWATCHER

Steve Mortensen,
Miracle Comics

Before sitting down to write this month's column, the family and I enjoyed an episode from Disney's *DuckTales* series back from back in the 1980s. This month's ***CBG*** is focusing on kids' comics —

and what better kids' comics are there than "Duck books"? In terms of newer issues, there are three known copies in CGC 9.8 of Gladstone's *DuckTales* #1 (Jun 90), but no recorded *sales* in that grade. Going back to the 1940s, there's Dell's *Four Color* #9 (Aug 42), a classic with "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold." It features 64 pages of art by Carl Barks (Barks' first Donald Duck comic-book work). The most recent sale of this issue occurred in March 2012, and that copy sold for $2,265 in CGC 5.5. In 2008, there was a recorded sale of $31,070 for a CGC 9.4. There's a wide selection of wonderful Carl Barks *Four Color* issues to choose from.

Recently, I had dinner with a fellow comics fan, and we discussed the latest happenings in comics, including this year's move of WonderCon from San Francisco to Anaheim. Conventions are a great place to get one-of-kind sketches from favorite artists, as well as to buy original art. Another way to enjoy original art at an affordable price is through IDW's *Artist Editions*. The *Artist Editions* are oversized hardcovers produced at the size of the original art. They only contain the black and white pencil and ink work and reproduce an entire single story in its original form. Dave Stevens, John Romita Sr., and Wally Wood have all had their work reproduced in glorious fashion — my friend brought over the Wally Wood book. The books have also proven to be good investments, since most are selling for at least double their original price of $100 to $150.

My friend and I ended our conversation talking about where we would put investment money today in comic books. Although I primarily collect comics from the 1970s on up, I'm drawn to the Golden Age key super-hero issues. There are many with very low CGC population reports that sell for relatively reasonable prices. *Detective Comics* #73 (Mar 43), the first Scarecrow cover, happens to be one of my favorites. I own a copy in CGC 1.5 and am happy with it, though, of course, I would love to have a high-grade copy. The highest recorded copy is a CGC 9.6 but it hasn't sold. A June 2011 Heritage sale of a copy in CGC 6.0 received $1,448.34 including Buyer's Premium, and a November 2011 Heritage sale of a copy in CGC 6.5 sold for $1,733. [Note: Heritage sold a CGC 6.5 copy in 2005 for $690.] One interesting note is that there are only 37 graded copies.

This is compared to a Silver Age key such as *Daredevil* #1 (Apr 64), which has 1,839 graded copies. The bottom line is that people love the Silver Age, but the *scarce* comic books are found in the Golden Age. The past 10 years have seen a great surge in prices, especially in the Silver and Bronze markets, as the children of the '70s are buying up their childhood.

*— **Steve Mortensen** owns **Miracle Comics** (**www.miraclecomics.com**) and **Micurio.com**, a free online community for sharing all collectibles. He can be reached at **steve@stevemortensen.com**.*

CBG TRENDWATCHER

Michael Tierney,
Collector's Edition

March sales remained strong and growing, despite having one less shipment week than the month before (or the previous year). My TV ads seem to get more effective every month.

DC's "New 52" relaunch continues to hold its readers and pick up new fans, making back-issue sales brisk on the earlier issues. But I'm a little shocked that *Captain Atom* hasn't been canceled yet. Out of all the "New 52," *Captain Atom* did the worst job of keeping its previous readers, which are now singular instead of plural, because I'm lucky to sell more than a single copy at either location.

Marvel's big event was the launch of *Avengers vs. X-Men*, with #0 quickly selling out. But there was no interest in an early Tuesday night release of #1 during the first week of April, so we skipped it and no one noticed. *Deadpool* has enjoyed a big resurgence of interest after the events of *Deadpool* #50.

Adventure Time is the newest breakout title for all-ages material. Boom!'s other recent hit of *Peanuts* continues to post super-hero-level numbers, and perpetual back-issue leader *Sonic* has also seen a recent influx of new readers. New titles always do well with an under-served all-ages market desperate for material, where older titles like *Bone* still continue to sell solid numbers as graphic novels.

Back-issue sales continue to blow up the registers. One store saw an overall increase of more than 60% for the first quarter when compared to the first-quarter average for the last three years. A couple of the hotter titles this month were *Batman* and *Classics Illustrated*, including the latter's earlier incarnation as *Classics Comics*.

Key Sales (all unslabbed):

Amazing Spider-Man #252 (1st app. black costume) FN- $12.50
Batman #241 VF $14
Batman #276 VF $15
Batman #277 VF- $12
Batman #299 VF+ $17
Batman #300 VF- $16
Batman #353 VF- $13
Batman #357 NM- $13
Batman #400 NM- $23

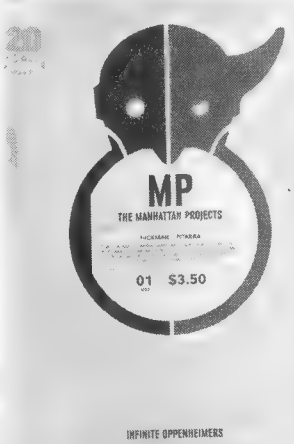
Classic Comics #9 (*Les Miserables*) 6th print FN+ $32
Classics Illustrated #38 (*Advs. of Cellini*) 1st print VG+ $28
Classics Illustrated #111 (*Talisman*) 1st print GD+ $11.25
Classics Illustrated #116 (*Bottle Imp*) 1st print GD+ $19
Classics Illustrated #167 (*Faust*) 1st print GD $18
Doctor Strange #169 (#1) FN- $45
Spectacular Spider-Man #1 FN $39

— ***Michael Tierney*** *runs* ***Collector's Edition*** *in North Little Rock and* ***The Comic Book Store*** *in Little Rock, Ark. He can be reached at* ***cbsrock@swbell.net*** *or* ***(501) 791-4222***.

CBG TRENDWATCHER

John Tinkess,
Another Dimension

It was another record month here, and, for the first time in years, our top-selling comic was from a publisher other than Marvel or DC. Image's *Saga* #1 by Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples got off to a spectacular start, outselling everything else. Along with *Rebel Blood*, *Manhattan Projects*, and *Fatale*, it seems as if all the biggest hits are coming from Image lately. *Batman*, *Justice League*, *Detective*, and *Action Comics* continued to be our top-selling DC titles, while *Avengers vs. X-Men* #0 topped the list for Marvel.



While most of DC's "New 52" titles have settled into a steady sales pattern, we have started to see sudden drops on a few middle-tier titles. *Justice League Dark*, *Green Arrow*, and *Red Lanterns* have all suffered a drop in sales over the last two months.

As we head into spring, we're coming out of what is normally the slowest period of the year — but, instead, comics sales this winter have been brisk. Sales are up across most publishers and titles, and I think that's largely due to the continuing momentum of the "New 52" from DC and the resurgence of Image. With such big-name creators as Vaughan and Ed Brubaker introducing new creator-owned projects, there seems to be a growing desire from readers to try something fresh. We're also seeing tons of new customers coming to the store every week. The season finale of *The Walking Dead* caused another burst of interest in the series, and the trade paperbacks started flying out of the store even faster than normal. Hopefully, this trend of growth will continue throughout the year.

Top Comics for March

Saga #1
Batman #7
Justice League #7
Justice League #6
Detective Comics #7
Action Comics #7
Avengers vs. X-Men #0
Green Lantern #7
Avengers Assemble #1
Batman and Robin #7
Rebel Blood #1
Amazing Spider-Man #681
Avengers X-Sanction #4
Ult. Comics Spider-Man #8
Wolverine and the X-Men #7
Manhattan Projects #1
Amazing Spider-Man #682
Batgirl #7
Carnage USA #4
Avengers #24
Swamp Thing #7
Fantastic Four #604
Fatale #3
Batman: The Dark Knight #7
Wonder Woman #7
Animal Man #7
Winter Soldier #3
Flash #7
Nightwing #7
Batwoman #7

— ***John Tinkess*** *runs* ***Another Dimension*** *in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He can be reached at* ***comics@another-dimension.com*** *or* ***(403) 283-7078***.

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Every Wed. and Sat. CA, City Of Industry. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave. SH: 9am-5pm. A: Free. T: 250. Johnny, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA, 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Jul 11-15 CA, San Diego. Comic-Con International. Convention Center, 111 W. Harbor Dr. Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA, 92112. PH: 619-491-2475.

COLORADO

Jun 15-17 CO, Denver. Comic Con. Convention Center, 700 14th St. SH: Fri. 6pm-10pm, Sat.-Sun. 10am-6pm. A: $10-$45. T: 100. F: $300. Keith Royle. keith@comicbookclassroom.org

FLORIDA

Jun 29-Jul 2 FL, Miami. Supercon. Miami Airport Convention Center, 711 NW 72nd Ave. SH: Fri. 12noon-3am, Sat. 11am-3am, Sun. 11am-3am, Mon. 11am-9pm. PH: 954-399-1330 or info@floridasupercon.com or www.floridasupercon.com.

ILLINOIS

Jul 29 IL, Peoria. Comic Book Convention. Grand Hotel, 4400 N. Brandywine Dr. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599 or www.epguides.com/comics.

INDIANA

Jun 10 IN, Indianapolis. Comic Book Show. Ramada Inn, 6990 E. 21st St. SH: 9:30am-3:30pm. A: $4. T: 60. Andy Holzman. PH: 317-824-9602 or www.epguides.com/comics.

IOWA

Jun 16 IA, Bettendorf. Comic Book Show. Ramada Inn, 3020 Utica Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599 or www.epguides.com/comics.

Jun 23 IA, Des Moines-Urbandale. ComicCon. Comfort Suites At Living History Farms, 11167 Hickman Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599 or www.epguides.com/comics.

MINNESOTA

Jun 24 MN, Mounds View. Twin Cities Comi-Con. Mermaid Entertainment Center, 2200 Hwy. 10. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599 or www.epguides.com/comics.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Jun 10 NH, Manchester. Granite State Comicon. Radisson Center of New Hampshire, 700 Elm St. SH: 10am-6pm. A: $8. Double Midnight Comics & Collectibles, 245 Maple Street, Unit 11, Manchester, NH, 03103. PH: 603-669-9636.

NEW JERSEY

Jul 6-8 NJ, Wildwood. Comic Book Show. Convention Center, 4501 Broadwalk. SH: Fri. 3pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. A: Free. T: 125. F: $175. Rob or Karen Gomberg, 3 Rachel Court, Franklin Park, NJ, 08823. PH: 732-422-9365 or robkarpro@comcast.net.

NEW MEXICO

Jun 8-10 NM, Albuquerque. Comic Expo. Convention Center. SH: Fri. 2pm-8pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 10am-6pm. PH: 505-465-9668 or http://abqcomicexpo.com.

NORTH CAROLINA

Jun 9-10 NC, Greensboro. Triad Toy, Hobby & Sportscard Show. Coliseum Special Event Ctr., I-40 exit 217. SH: Sat. 9am-5pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. A: $6-$7. T: 350. Inside Pitch Promotions, Wes Starkey. PH: 540-593-3736 or wes@swva.net.

Jun 22-24 NC, Charlotte. HeroesCon. Convention Center, 501 S. College St. A: $15-$30. Heroes Aren't Hard to Find, Shelton Drum, 1957 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC, 28204. PH: 704-375-7462.

Jun 23-24 NC, Raleigh. Toy, Hobby & Sportscard Show. State Fairgrounds, Kerr Scott Bldg., 1025 Blue Ridge Rd. SH: Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. A: $5-$7. T: 175. Inside Pitch Promotions, Wes Starkey. PH: 540-593-3736 or wes@swva.net.

Jul 21 NC, Hickory. Toy, Hobby & Sportscard Show. Metro Convention Center, I-40, Exit 125. SH: 9am-4pm. A: $4. T: 150. Inside Pitch Promotions, Wes Starkey. PH: 540-593-3736 or wes@swva.net.

OHIO

Jun 24 OH, Akron-Canton. Comic Con. Chapparell's Community Center, 2418 S. Arlington Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $4. F: $80. Jeff Harper, PO Box 1371, Locust Grove, VA, 22508. PH: 540-412-2879.

PENNSYLVANIA

Jul 15 PA, Essington-Philadelphia. Comic Con. Ramada Airport, 76 Industrial Hwy. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $3. F: $70. Derek Woywood. PH: 856-217-5737 or dwoywood@yahoo.com.

TENNESSEE

Jun 9-10 TN, Knoxville. Comic & Anime Con. The Falls Cedar Bluff Convention Center, 321 North Cedar Bluff Rd. SH: Sat. 10am-5pm, Sun. 11am-4pm. A: $5. contact@knoxvillecomicanimecon.comwww.knoxvillecomicanimecon.com

Jun 16 TN, Johnson City. Collectors Showcase Comic & Toy Convention. Best Western Plus, 2406 N Roan Street. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $3. Collectors Showcase, 5618 Academy Drive, 37814, TN. PH: 423-307-3848 or shannon@purgatory-comics.com.

TEXAS

Jun 22-24 TX, San Antonio. Texas Comicon. Event Center, 8111 Meadow Leaf Dr. www.texascomicon.com

VIRGINIA

Jul 1 VA, Tysons Corner. Comic Book Show. Crowne Plaza, 1960 Chain Bridge Rd. SH: 10am-3:30pm. A: $3. T: 30. Nick Shoff. PH: 301-990-4929.

Jul 8 VA, Richmond. Virginia Comicon. Crowne Plaza West , 6531 West Broad St. SH: 10am-3:30pm. http://vacomicon.com

WISCONSIN

Jul 28 WI, Oak Creek. Milwaukee Comic Book Convention. Classic Lanes, 7501 S. Howell Ave. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599 or www.epguides.com/comics.

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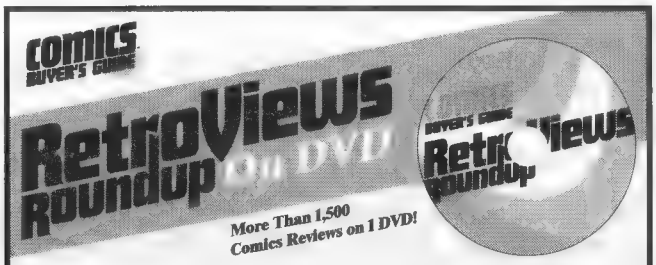

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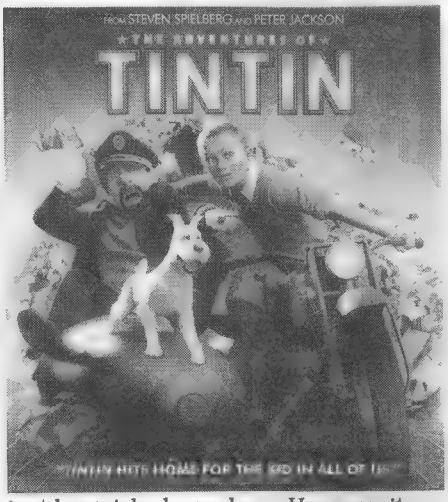
RESONATING RECOMMENDATIONS

Timothy Markin
P.O. Box 8921
Erie, PA 16505

Peter David's article in ***CBG*** #1690 (Jun 12) about the *John Carter* movie resonated with me.

I understand anticipation for a movie adaptation of a favorite property and finally seeing and enjoying that movie. In the months leading up to the release of *The Adventures of Tintin*, I frequently watched YouTube interviews with Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson and reading articles about the movie on the Internet. (There's a great website called *Tintinologist.org* that caters to both seasoned and neophyte Tintin fans.) I've been a Tintin fan for years after having discovered the character in the serialized reprints in *Children's Digest* in the 1970s. It's unfortunate that he never caught on in America, because the movie



just languished over here. However, it was a huge hit overseas, where Tintin, Snowy, and Captain Haddock are national treasures.

As a child, I never would have imagined seeing a 3-D Tintin movie in which the animation was as brilliant and realistic as it was in this one and directed by a legend like Steven Spielberg. I hear people saying there won't be a sequel because the film did poorly domestically; however, it was a smash overseas, so there *should* be another movie. I just hope it plays here.

One thing to say about *Tintin* compared to *John Carter* is that everyone seems to know that Tintin was based on a comic-book series (so the *Indiana Jones* comparisons were kept in perspective). The uninformed people saying that *John Carter* was a *Star Wars/Avatar* ripoff must have been too lazy to use their computers to research the character instead of blogging their ignorance, as Peter David said.

VHAT'S VVSS?

Ray Higdon

In your price guides, there is a reference next to comics on which I need

FOR ART'S SAKE

by Chris Smigliano

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prices. It is "VVSS," and there is a big price range with this designation. Please explain what "VVSS" means.

Brent: *"VVSS" means Valiant Vision Starter Set. They were polybagged issues of several Valiant titles, including* ***Solar, Man of the Atom****. The sets contained a poster and a pair of cardboard glasses (much like 3-D glasses) that gave the pages depth by pulling the reds forward. The price range includes consideration of whether the issue in question has all the parts of the set.*

AVENGERS MEMORIES

Bill W. Miller
605 E. Cherry
Watseka, IL 60970

I bought *Avengers* #167 (Jan 78) off the rack because it featured The Guardians of the Galaxy, whose adventures I had followed from *Marvel Presents*.

The story was a follow-up to that year's *Thor Annual* (#7), which also involved The Guardians, as they pursued the man-machine Korvac.

Avengers #167 wound up being Part 1 of what would later be called "The Korvac Saga." It was an epic tale lasting nearly a year, although #169 was an unrelated fill-in issue, yet still entertaining. (In those days, reprints and fill-ins were as common as crossovers are now.)

In a strange way, however, the conclusion was both satisfying *and* anti-climactic. I felt the same way a decade later on reading *Watchmen* #12 (Oct 87). Both stories dealt with a hero-villain (depending on perspective) trying to save the world by remaking it in his own image. Both conclusions seem to indict the heroes, as if they had been standing in the way of progress.

(That indictment was more appropriate in *Watchmen*, which at least let readers know ahead of time that it was going to be an exercise in revision and deconstruction.)

Despite my lukewarm reaction to the conclusion of both stories, I enjoyed the ride. But I never collected *Avengers*

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As someone who's been writing Disney comics for decades, I've thought a lot about what makes comics for kids good or bad. And I've come to the conclusion that it's pretty much the same thing that makes any story good or bad. Never talk down to your readers. (Even if most of 'em need booster seats.) And always write something you'd want to read yourself. It's that simple. ©2012 Last Kiss Inc.

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***Avengers* #167 featured The Guardians of the Galaxy and began "The Korvac Saga."**

FLASHBACKS

120 yrs May 28, 1892 ***Freckles and His Friends*** creator **Merrill Blosser** is born.

130 yrs Jun 21, 1882 Graphic-novel pioneer **Rockwell Kent** is born.

115 yrs Jun 19, 1897 **Three Stooges** leader **Moe Howard** (born Moses Horwitz) is born. The Stooges appeared in comics and cartoons, as well as in live-action comedies.

100 yrs Jun 16, 1912 Cartoonist and illustrator **Albert Chartier** is born. He is best known for ***Onésime***.

95 yrs Jun 25, 1917 Golden Age writer, novelist, screenwriter, and columnist **William Woolfolk** is born. His projects include **Captain Marvel** and **Blackhawk**), and he creates Captain Marvel's "Holy moley" catch-phrase.

90 yrs Jun 16, 1922 **Kid Colt** and hot-rod comics artist **Jack R. Keller** is born.

90 yrs Jun 27, 1922 Golden Age artist-writer **Ruben Moreira** is born. He co-creates **Roy Raymond** and **Rip Hunter**.

85 yrs Jun 15, 1927 Artist and editor **Ross Andru** is born.

85 yrs Jun 15, 1927 ***Corto Maltese*** creator artist **Hugo Pratt** is born.

85 yrs Jun 17, 1927 Writer-artist **Wallace Wood** is born. Best known for his work for E.C., he also pioneers independent-comics publishing with his ***Witzend*** magazine.

80 yrs Jun 6, 1932 The ***Napoleon*** newspaper comics feature written and drawn by **Clifford McBride** begins.

70 yrs Jun 1942 ***Crime Does Not Pay #22***, created, edited, and drawn by **Charles Biro** and published by **Lev Gleason**, is the first comic book devoted exclusively to crime and punishment.

70 yrs Jun 1942 ***Detective Comics* #64** introduces **Boy Commandos** by **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby**.

65 yrs Jun 26, 1947 Italian editor and **Bonelli** writer **Alfredo Castelli** is born. Founder of the first Italian comics fanzine, ***Comics Club 104***, he creates **Martin Mystère**.

65 yrs Jun 29, 1947 **Norman Maurer** marries **Joan Howard**, daughter of The Three Stooges' Moe.

60 yrs Jun 2, 1952 Writer **Dwight Jon Zimmerman** is born. He edits ***MICRA*** and is the assistant editor of ***Marvel Age***.

60 yrs Jun 7, 1952 ***Eternity Smith*** penciller and animation artist **Rick Hoberg** is born.

60 yrs Jun 15, 1952 Cartoonist **Rick Stasi** is born.

60 yrs Jun 23, 1952 The ***Dragnet*** comic strip begins. During its three-year run, it was scripted by **Jack Robinson** and drawn by a series of artists: **Joe Sheiber**, **Bill Ziegler**, and **Mel Keefer**.

60 yrs Jun 1952 E.C.'s ***Weird Fantasy* #13** prints a comic-book adaptation of **Ray Bradbury** short stories without payment to him. When Bradbury points it out, the company pays — and begins a friendly relationship with the author.

55 yrs Jun 4, 1957 Writer, cartoonist, and lecturer **Michal Jacot** is born.

55 yrs Jun 8, 1957 ***Dilbert*** creator **Scott Adams** is born.

55 yrs Jun 8, 1957 **Don Thompson** meets **Maggie Curtis** at the home of science-fiction writer **Basil Wells**. Among others there: **Edmond Hamilton**, **Leigh Brackett**, **Andre Norton**, **P. Schuyler Miller**, and **Betsy Curtis**.

55 yrs Jun 17, 1957 Artist **Hilary Barta** is born.

55 yrs Jun 18, 1957 ***Out Our Way*** cartoonist **J.R. Williams** dies, age 68.

55 yrs Jun 21, 1957 Writer, artist, and editor **Gary Carlson** is born.

50 yrs Jun 14, 1962 Artist **Den Beauvais** is born.

50 yrs Jun 17, 1962 Writer-artist **Richard Maurizio** is born.

50 yrs Jun 23, 1962 **Don Thompson** marries **Maggie Curtis**.

50 yrs Jun 1962 ***Strange Tales* #92** introduces a prototype of **Aunt May**.

50 yrs Jun 1962 ***Fantastic Four* #5** introduces **Doctor Doom**.

50 yrs Jun 1962 ***Justice League of America* #12** introduces the first **Doctor Light**.

50 yrs Jun 1962 ***Atom* #1** introduces **Maya** and **Plant-Master**.

45 yrs Jun 1, 1967 Artist, writer, and activist **Alonzo L. Washington** is born. He creates ***Omega Man***.

45 yrs Jun 11, 1967 Artist **Kevin Paul Shaw Broden** is born.

45 yrs Jun 11, 1967 Writer **Terry Collins** is born.

45 yrs Jun 16, 1967 Artist **Arnold Pander** is born. With his brother **Jacob**, he draws ***Grendel*** and ***The World of Ginger Fox***.

45 yrs Jun 24, 1967 ***Samurai Penguin*** artist and film model maker **Mark Christopher Buck** is born.

45 yrs Jun 27, 1967 **ComicBase** creator **Peter Bickford** is born.

45 yrs Jun 1967 DC's ***Shade the Changing Man* #1** introduces **Shade** in "Escape to Battleground Earth!" written by **Steve Ditko** and **Michael Fleisher** and drawn by Ditko.

45 yrs Jun 1967 DC's ***Sea Devils* #35** is the last issue of the series.

40 yrs Jun 17, 1972 **Richard Pini** and **Wendy Fletcher** are married, having met via the letters column of Marvel's ***Silver Surfer***.

40 yrs Jun 22, 1972 Image artist **Jae Lee** is born. He creates ***Hellshock***.

40 yrs Jun 30, 1972 Writer **Dave Galvan** is born.

40 yrs Jun 1972 DC's ***All-Star Western*** is renamed ***Weird Western Tales*** with **#12**.

40 yrs Jun 1972 Marvel's ***Combat Kelly* #1** introduces **Combat Kelly** to 1970s readers in a story by **Gary Friedrich**, **Dick Ayers**, and **Jim Mooney**.

40 yrs Jun 1972 Marvel's ***Hero for Hire* #1** introduces **Luke Cage** in "Out of Hell — a Hero!" written by **Roy Thomas**, **John Romita**, and **Archie Goodwin** and drawn by **George Tuska** and **Billy Graham**.

40 yrs Jun 1972 After 22 years, DC's ***Tomahawk*** ends with **#140**.

40 yrs Jun 1972 It's a month for landmark issues, what with ***Sub-Mariner* #50**, ***The Avengers* #100**, ***Rawhide Kid* #100**, ***Captain America* #150**, ***Thor* #200**, and ***Wonder Woman* #200**.

40 yrs Jun 1972 DC begins its run of ***Korak*** with **#46**, written by **Len Wein** and drawn by **Frank Thorne**. Also in the issue: stories of **David Innes** and **Carson of Venus**.

35 yrs Jun 6, 1977 The ***Howard the Duck*** comic strip by **Steve Gerber** and **Gene Colan** begins.

35 yrs Jun 14, 1977 Radio performer and voice artist **Alan Reed** dies of cancer at age 69. He is best known as the voice of **Fred Flintstone**.

35 yrs Jun 22, 1977 The **Walt Disney** feature film ***The Rescuers*** opens, based on the **Margery Sharp "Miss Bianca"** stories.

35 yrs Jun 1977 Marvel's ***Howard the Duck* #13** features the first full comics appearance of **Kiss**.

30 yrs Jun 1982 Marvel's ***Team America* #1** is based on the Ideal action figures and toys. **David Kraft**, **Mike Vosburg**, and **Vince Colletta** produce the issue.

25 yrs Jun 5, 1987 **"Peter Parker"** "marries" **"Mary Jane Watson"** in Shea Stadium in Queens.

25 yrs Jun 8, 1987 **Tom Batiuk**'s ***Crankshaft*** strip begins.

25 yrs Jun 1987 ***Amazing Spider-Man* #289** introduces **Hobgoblin II (Macendale/Jack O'Lantern)**.

25 yrs Jun 1987 ***Megaton Explosion*** introduces **Youngblood**.

20 yrs Jun 3, 1992 ***Mad*** publisher **William M. Gaines** dies at age 70.

20 yrs Jun 19, 1992 **Pacific Comic Exchange** announces the sale of a VG+ copy of ***Detective Comics* #27** for $29,850.

20 yrs Jun 1992 ***Solar* #10** introduces **Eternal Warrior**.

20 yrs Jun 1992 ***Youngblood* #2** introduces **Shadowhawk** created, written, and pencilled by **Jim Valentino**.

15 yrs Jun 1, 1997 Cartoonist **Ruth Atkinson Ford** dies of cancer at age 78. She co-creates ***Millie the Model*** and ***Patsy Walker***.

5 yrs Jun 10, 2007 Japanese creator of **Puu-san** (**"Mr. Poo"**) and publisher of ***Taizo Manga*** **Taizo Yokoyama** dies of a lung infection at age 90.

5 yrs Jun 13, 2007 Media journalist **Daniel Robert Epstein** dies at age 31.

5 yrs Jun 15, 2007 Special-effects pioneer **Stan Winston** dies at age 62. He designs the screen version of **Iron Man**.

FULL FRONTAL NERDITY by Aaron Williams

again until the "Heroes Return" storyline almost 20 years later.

I like modern Marvel movies because they remind me of how much fun Marvel's comics used to be. (Call me a 47-year-old fogy!) I want to see *The Avengers* film, if only to see what Stan Lee will do in his cameo this time.

HULK AND AVENGERS

Richard Brown
2326 Cabot
Detroit, MI 48209

I recently watched a DVD that included an interview with Stan Lee about The Hulk, and it reminded me of something from *Incredible Hulk* #1 (May 62). In the origin story, ground zero of the gamma bomb blast was described as being "a good five miles away."

Five miles away? It makes me wonder about the atmosphere, the animals, and any *other* humans who may have been affected in that "lonely field" in New Mexico in 1962.

Did throwing Rick Jones in a nearby ditch unequivocally protect him from fallout as well as physical and emotional shocks?

The Avengers #2 (Nov 63) is my favorite *Avengers* issue. I like shape-shifters, and Jack Kirby's art was great. The Space Phantom was an intriguing villain. At issue's end (**Spoiler Warning!**), The Hulk left the team. Why did Lee do this? And Thor was nasty to The Hulk in the story, something I didn't like.

As a side note, at one point, Rick Jones tells The Space Phantom (who's taken on The Hulk's form) that The Hulk's secret identity is Don Blake. Ooops.

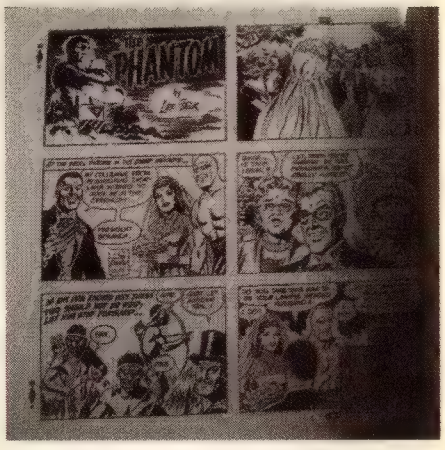
Brent: *You're right that the blast radius distance is low, since the gamma bomb was supposed to be stronger than any other bomb. In comparison, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had estimated areas of complete destruction of one mile from ground zero, severe damage at the 1.25-mile radius, moderate damage at 2 miles, and light damage up to 3.5 miles away. Bombs developed in the 1950s had destructive power two to five times those estimates, so they already exceeded the gamma bomb.*

As for the Don Blake gaffe, Stan has said in other interviews that he had a heck of a time keeping his characters straight, hence the alliterative names given to so many. In an early issue of ***Amazing Spider-Man****, Doc Ock referred to The Wall-Crawler as Superman.*

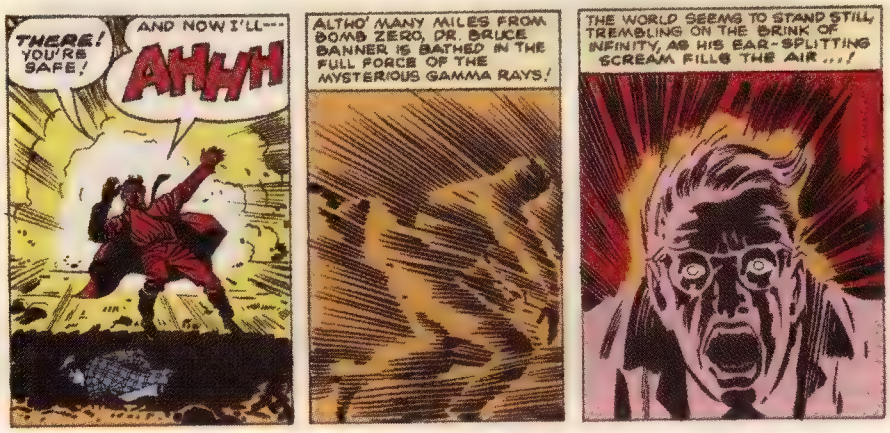
FINDING A HOLY GRAIL

Jack Abramowitz

In a recent issue of ***CBG***, contributors were asked, among other things, about our "holy grails" of comics-related items. I had two: a Doc Savage bust and a lithograph of The Phantom's wedding. Shortly after the piece ran, I saw the bust on eBay with a "Buy It Now" that was out of my range. After intense negotiations (the maximum three "best offers" and two counter-offers), I acquired Doc Savage!



I still haven't found the Phantom print, but I *did* find this original production art from the Sunday strip in which The Phantom marries. (Note Mandrake in the lower left panel.) Nevertheless, if



anyone can point me in the direction of the piece I seek, it would be greatly appreciated!

Brent: *Happy to help, Jack. We'll feature our readers' Favorite Finds and Holy Grails next issue.*

AVENGERS VS. X-MEN REDUX

Lee Houston, Junior

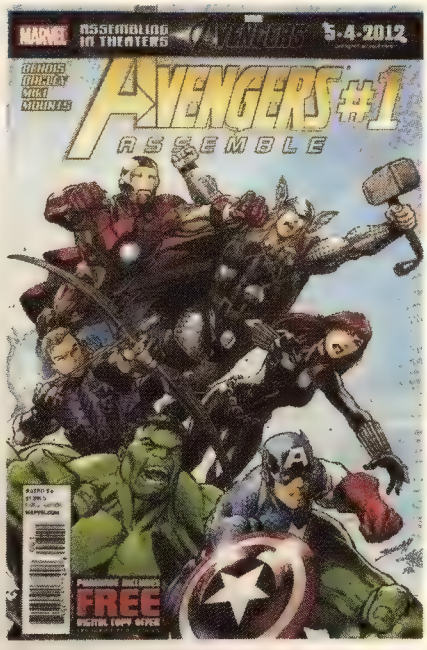
I see all the hype over the current *Avengers vs. X-Men* mini-series and just have to stop to wonder why.

I can understand Marvel's wanting to do something big print-wise with the characters that are about to star in their first movie and I'm sure there is a lot that can be said about this latest match-up from the commercial and business perspectives.

But *creatively?* Am I the only one who remembers the original contest from 1987? Of course, at the time, the mutants got top billing and it only took a four-issue mini-series to tell the story — not this multi-part extravaganza over multiple titles that is going on now.

All I'm saying is that it probably would have been better to produce something more focused on The Avengers in general, or the featured characters from the movie specifically, and not involve other series in the process.

Brent: *Marvel is doing that, as well, Lee, with its new* ***Avengers Assemble*** *title, plus a movie prequel mini-series and plenty of collections featuring the characters featured in the film.*



TONY'S BACK PAGE

Tony Isabella

Treasure Chest

Remember a few issues back, when I mentioned I wished that I still had the issues of *Treasure Chest* I'd bought while a student at Sts. Philip and James School in Cleveland, Ohio? Imagine my delight and surprised when I subsequently received a box of old *Treasure Chest* comics from a ***CBG*** reader. This generous guy has amassed a complete set of the title and bound them in hardcover columns. He sent me — no strings attached — duplicates he'd acquired during that process. Is any wonder I love comics fans?

Treasure Chest Vol. 19, #11 (Jan. 30, 1964) is easily one of my favorite issues from my years collecting the title. Its cover feature was the opening chapter of "Pettigrew for President," a 10-chapter serial about the fictitious campaign of a New York governor to be the Democratic Party candidate for President. It was written by Barry Reese and drawn so expertly by the great Joe Sinnott that young Tony never noticed Pettigrew was never shown clearly until the final chapter's big reveal.

This issue had lots of other good stuff in it, as well. There was the opening chapter of a new "The Champ" serial by Frank Moss with art by Frank Borth. The hero of this adventure-humor series was a young man, wide of girth and short of height, who would nonetheless always manage to best those who took him lightly.

In the pages of *Treasure Chest*, "Chuck White" grew from a juvenile delinquent to a fine young man. His serials were a mainstay of the comic book and, in this issue, writer Max Pine and artist Fran Matera started him on a new adventure in New York City. I wonder if Chuck ever met Governor Pettigrew during his stay.

Other features in this issue included a short biography of Amelia Earhart drawn by Reed Crandall from a script by Helen Gillum; the homey "Floogles" in a prose story; an animated mouse-narrated fact feature on movie-making; crafts with "Patsy Planner"; and a single-page gag starring the turban-topped Ali. That's 36 pages of cover-to-cover fun, all in color for a dime, and a very fond memory of my 1960s childhood.

TOP 10 FAVORITE KIDS' COMICS COVERS

CHOSEN BY SCOTT ROBINS & SNOW WILDSMITH

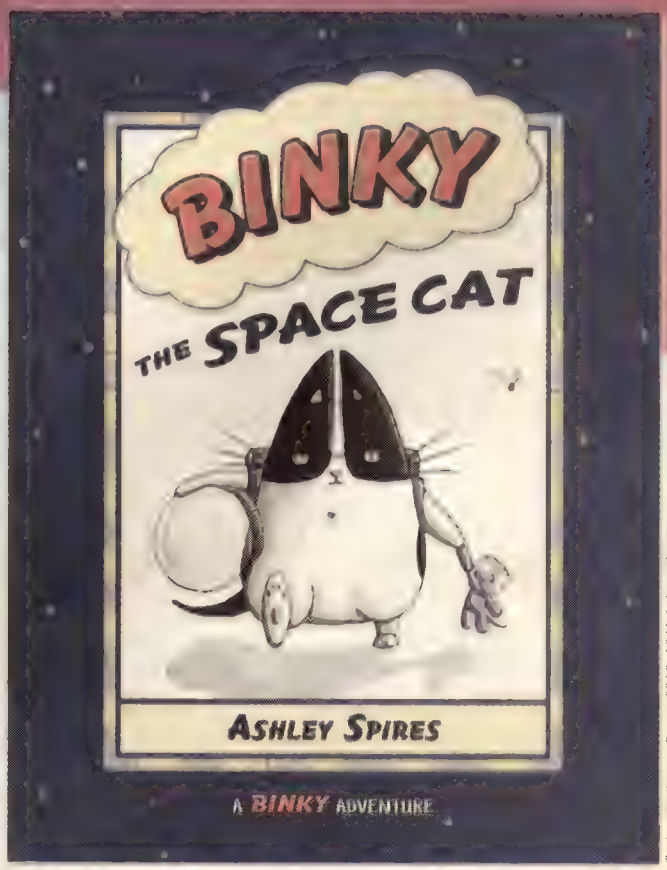
In anticipation of the publication of our new book ***A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics***, we've selected 10 striking covers that are sure to draw in young readers ready to sit down with a great graphic novel.

It wasn't easy selecting only 10 covers of the 100 that are featured in our new book.

We tried to pick covers that we knew were eye-catching, either because the kids in our libraries raved about them or because they had elements that were likely to appeal to a wide range of readers. After our many years of reading, reviewing, and enjoying children's graphic novels, great covers tend to leap out at us. All the covers here catch the eye and will lead readers into exciting, funny, thought-provoking, and sometimes crazy stories.

The Arrival © 2006 Shaun Tan

***The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (2006).** *As librarians, we couldn't resist this cover, because it looks like a mysterious old book. The sepia-toned photo of a seemingly ordinary man talking to an unexpected creature sets the tone for Tan's magical world.*



Binky the Space Cat © 2009, 2010 Ashley Spires

***Binky the Space Cat* by Ashley Spires (2009).** *There's no denying that Binky is an adorable cat, but it is his serious astronaut pose — complete with fishbowl helmet and a background of stars — that will make potential readers laugh out loud and pick up the book.*

Captain Raptor and the Moon Mystery © 2005 Kevin O'Malley and Patrick O'Brien
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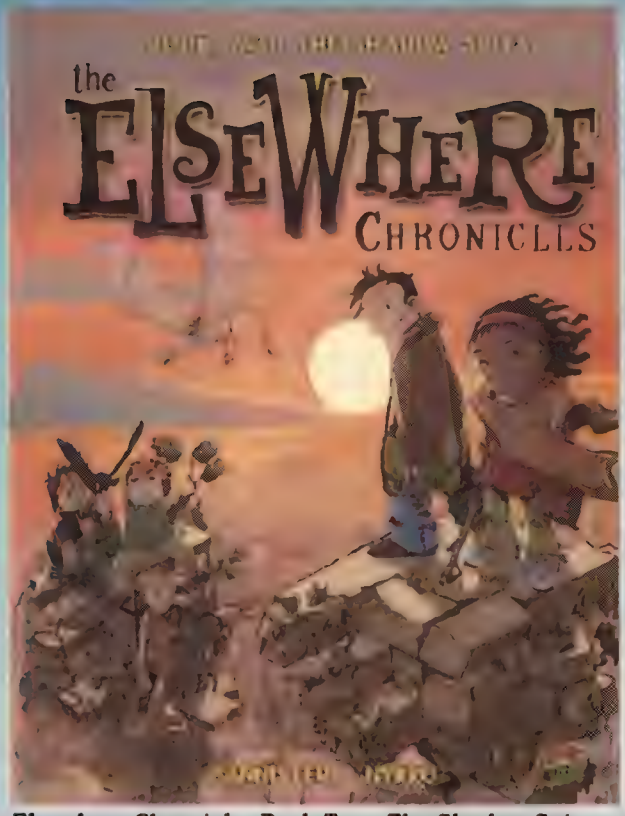
***Captain Raptor and the Moon Mystery* written by Kevin O'Malley, art by Patrick O'Brien (2005).** *Reminiscent of old science-fiction novels and movies — but with a dinosaur twist — the space-opera-style painted cover immediately captures readers' attention.*



Elsewhere Chronicles Book Two *The Shadow Spies* © 2008 by Nykko and Bannister.
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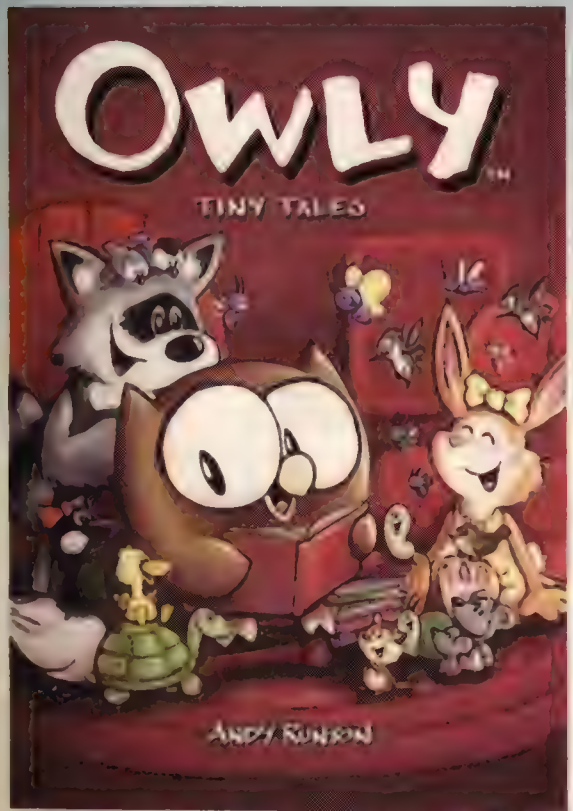
Elsewhere Chronicles* Book Two: *The Shadow Spies* written by Nykko, art by Bannister (2008).** *Readers will immediately want to know who these interesting characters are — and* ***where *they are! This cover provides an immediate sense of place: perfect for this otherworldly fantasy series.*



Owly Vol. 5: *Tall Tales* © 2008 Andy Runton

Owly Vol. 5: *Tall Tales* by Andy Runton (2008). *We couldn't resist this friendly cover, with Runton's cast of animal characters happily reading while wrapped in a warm, burgundy background. Parents will hope to echo this scene with their own kids!*

Resistance Book One © 2010 Leland Purvis. Reprinted by arrangement with First Second, an imprint of Roaring Brook Press.

***Resistance* Book One written by Carla Jablonski, art by Leland Purvis (2010).** *This is a picture-perfect example of how to catch a reader's eye with a cover. The slingshot aiming at the Nazi helmet practically compels younger readers (especially boys) to pick up the book.*

Sidekicks © 2011 Dan Santat.

Sidekicks by Dan Santat (2011). *The dramatic super-hero poses and the bright, full-moon backdrop gives Santat a chance to show off his brilliant colors.*

Smile © 2010 Raina Telgemeier.

***Smile* by Raina Telgemeier (2010).** *The combination of two familiar items (a smiley face and braces) results in a surprising image toward which tweens immediately gravitate.*

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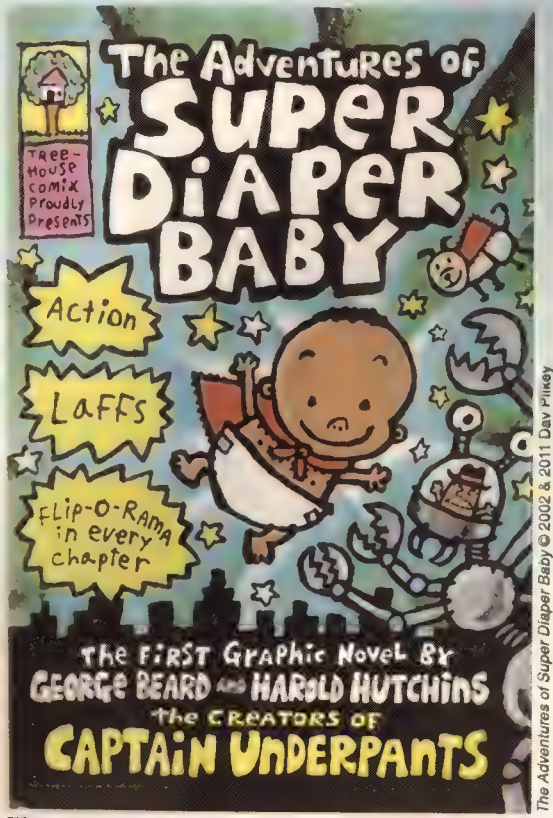
***Stinky* by Eleanor Davis (2011).** *Toon Books almost always has terrific covers that kick off stories right on the front of the book. Here, the cover is a one-panel comic in and of itself and it gives Davis a chance to show off her gorgeous art.*



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***The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby* by Dav Pilkey (2002).** *Pilkey's story is supposed to be a comic book written by two young boys, so he parodies old comic-book covers, right down to the publisher's symbol and the word balloons promising "Laffs."*

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by **BRENT FRANKENHOFF**

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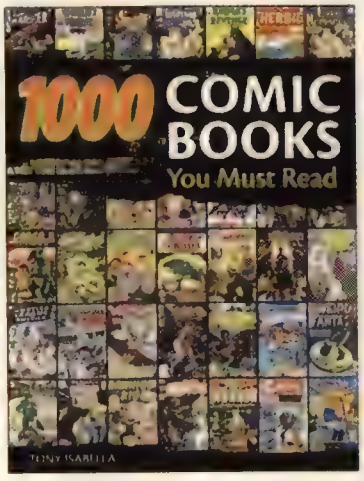

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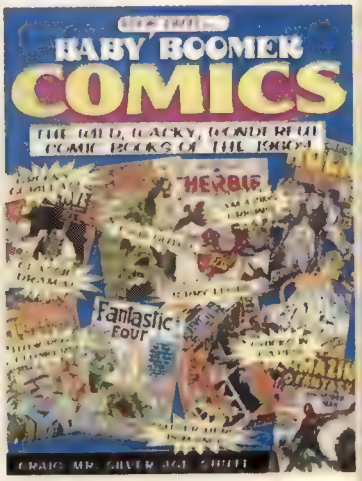

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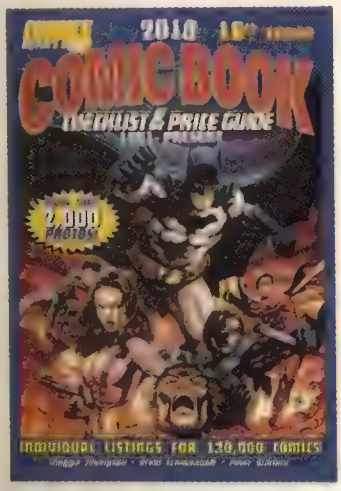

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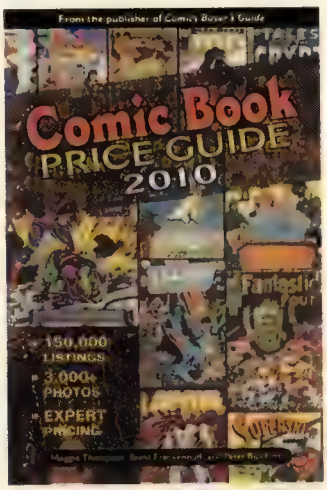

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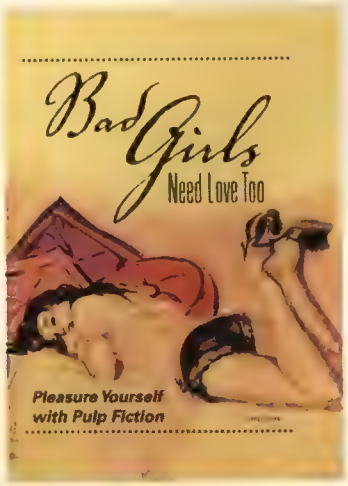

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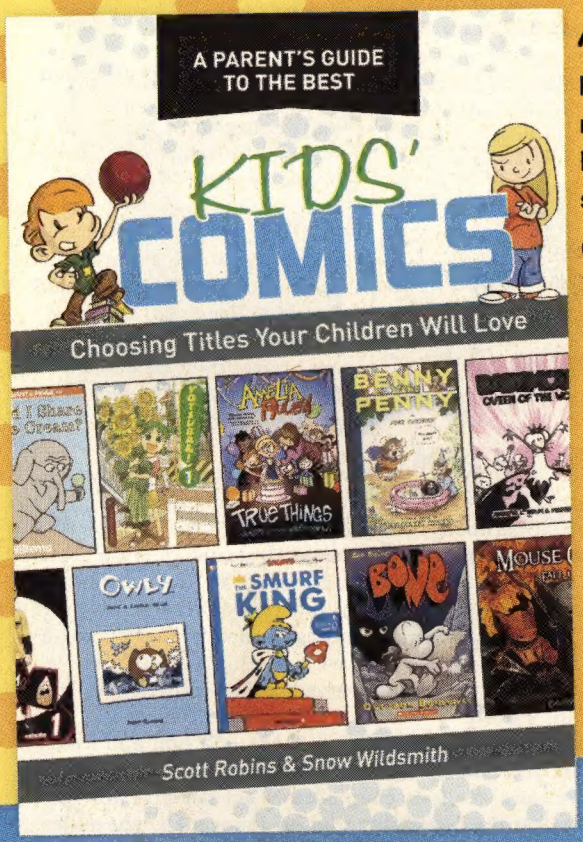

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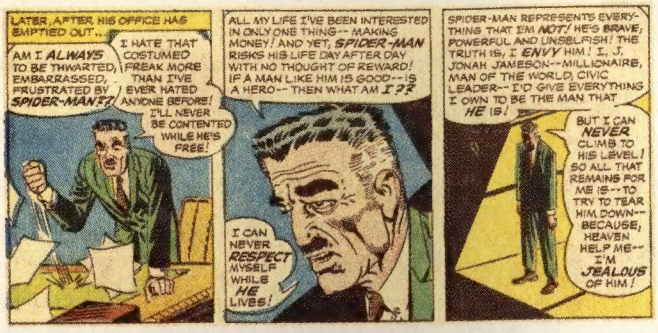
Did J. Jonah Jameson have a point?

Taking responsibility

by **PETER DAVID**

I'm beginning to wonder if J. Jonah Jameson might not have had a point.

He's certainly come a long way from the earliest days, when he was intended to be Spider-Man's nemesis, stirring up *The Daily Bugle's* reading public against our hero through fair means or foul.



Yes, granted, there was that early issue when he had a dramatic monologue admitting that he was, in fact, motivated by extreme jealousy over Spider-Man's using his abilities for the commonweal.

Nevertheless, one is moved by recent events to speculate that Jameson's many rants weren't based in genuine and well-founded concerns.

As of this writing, George Zimmerman, the man who shot Trayvon Martin, has been arrested and is awaiting trial. There is still a possibility that the "stand your ground" law upon which Zimmerman's defense is based may cause the judge to kick him loose before a jury can hear evidence.

There are those who have contended that this is a racial issue. They were convinced that, if Martin had been the shooter and Zimmerman the victim, Martin would have been in jail, without any chance of bail, within minutes of the incident. I'm actually one of those who said that, on my Twitter feed.

There are others — including recently (again, as of this writing) Bill Cosby — who have asserted that race is not remotely the issue here. Instead, the issue is exactly what gun advocates don't want to see discussed: gun control. It's the *pro forma* discussion that always accompanies incidents like this, and causes a great deal of head-shaking and discussion that leads nowhere because no one in power wants to tick off the NRA. Interestingly, that was *also* something I said, over on my website.

So the important thing is that, no matter which side of the discussion is being examined, I called it. Whatever that's worth.

The thing is, it wasn't just that J. Jonah Jameson had a mad-on for Spider-Man. The whole basis for his rants was that Spider-Man was a masked vigilante who, by definition of his nature, could avoid being held responsible for the actions that he took. Nobody knew who The Wall-Crawler was; therefore, he could act with impunity. This, Jameson argued, was wrong. Private citizens shouldn't be able to just go around and take the law into their own hands without worrying about dealing with the consequences of their actions.

Is that *so* wrong-headed a point of view to have? Really?

Because let's face it: That's what "stand your ground" really is — a license to kill with no responsibility to be faced for your actions, and you don't even have to be James Bond.

I don't have any objection to the concept that a man's (not to mention a woman's) home is his castle. If someone breaks into my house and I have the means at hand to stop him, I'm going to do whatever's necessary to protect myself and mine and not give it a second thought. Because I figure, if someone illegally sets foot in my house, then they're looking for trouble and it's their own problem if they find it.

In order to justify Spider-Man's actions (or Zimmerman's, for that matter), one has to assume that an entire section of a city — a neighborhood, in this instance — is the equivalent of a house. And that, when certain people trespass in one's "house," then one has a broad legal license to pursue that person, chase them down (whether that person is directly threatening them or not), and render them unable to engage in criminal pursuits.

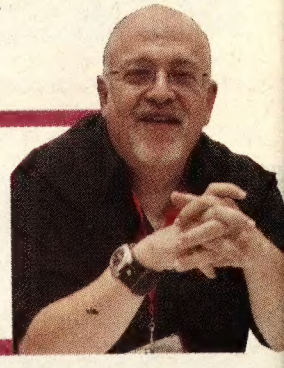
If you're Spider-Man, you leave them hanging webbed up to a lamppost with a note for the police. Friendly *neighborhood* Spider-Man, indeed.

But, if you're George Zimmerman, you kill him and then declare that you had no choice. Spider-Man, likewise, feels he has no choice. He feels compelled to act because failing to do so allows for the possibility that an innocent might suffer. Zimmerman claims he acted because he thought he himself might suffer and that, if Martin were allowed to walk free, he might harm innocent people because ... I dunno ... Skittles aren't good for you.

At least Zimmerman wasn't masked. At least we all know that he's George Zimmerman, and he is now — at least in some measure — being brought to account for his actions. Imagine if he were an unknown vigilante hiding behind a mask, capable of taking lethal action and disappearing into anonymity. You know: the way J. Jonah Jameson contended that Spider-Man could do.

Except you figure, hey, he's Spidey. You can trust him.

Yeah, well ... anyone want to see The Punisher operating with the protection of "stand your ground"?



PETER DAVID, can be written to at P.O. Box 239, Bayport, NY 11705, or visited at *www.peter david.net*. His book, ***Writing for Comics and Graphic Novels with Peter David***, is available from F+W's Impact imprint at ***www.impact-books.com***. "But I Digress" is © 2012 Second Age, Inc.

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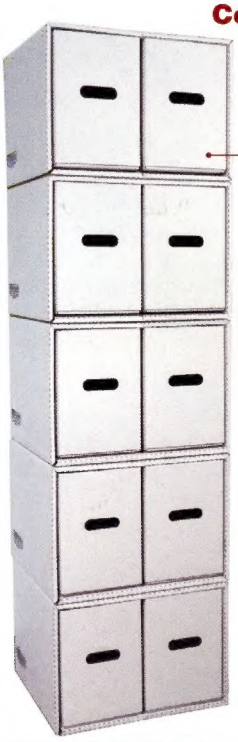

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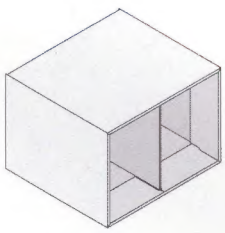

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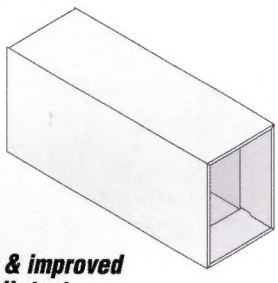

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